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ABSTRACT

This report uses data from the 1995-96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study to examine the factors that first time students consider when choosing an institution for postsecondary education. Specifically, it describes the importance of reputation, location, price, and influence, and assesses how this varies with student characteristics. Students attending public four-year; private, not-for-profit four-year; and public two-year institutions are considered separately. Highlighted among study findings are the following: beginning students at both public and private, not-for-profit four-year institutions were more likely to cite reputation as the most important reason for choosing their institution; students at public four-year institutions were more likely than students at private, not-for-profit four-year institutions to identify location or price as the most important reason for their choice; and beginning students at public two-year institutions reported location as the most important reason for choosing their institutions. Following an introductory section, individual sections present tables, graphs, and text detailing findings concerning: enrollment patterns, choosing a four-year institution, and choosing a public two-year institution. Appended are a glossary and details on methodology. (DB)

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Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Reports

Choosing a Postsecondary Institution

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Statistical Analysis Report November 1998

Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Reports

Choosing a Postsecondary Institution

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Highlights

This report uses data from the 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96) to examine the factors that students enrolling in postsecondary education for the first time in 1995–96 considered in choosing their institution. Specifically, it describes the importance of reputation, location, price, and influence and how this varies with student characteristics. Students attending public 4-year; private, not-for-profit 4-year; and public 2-year institutions are considered separately.

- About 40 percent of undergraduates enrolling in postsecondary education for the first time in 1995–96 decided to attend a 4-year institution. A greater proportion enrolled in public than in private, not-for-profit institutions (25 percent versus 15 percent). Another 46 percent enrolled in public 2-year institutions, and the remaining 14 percent in other types of institutions.
- Public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions serve primarily traditional students, with the large majority of students under 24 years of age, financially dependent on their parents for financial aid purposes, and enrolled full time. Students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely than those at public 4-year institutions to come from families with incomes of $70,000 or more (among dependent students) and to have parents with an advanced degree.
- Compared with students at 4-year institutions, students at public 2-year institutions were much more likely to be 24 years or older, single parents, financially independent of their parents, and enrolled part time.
- Beginning postsecondary students at both public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely to cite reputation than location, price, or the influence of others as the most important reason for choosing their institution. However, students at public 4-year institutions were more likely than their counterparts at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to identify location or price as the most important reason for their choice.
- In general, beginning postsecondary students were satisfied with most aspects of their institutions. Students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely than those at public 4-year institutions to be satisfied with certain aspects of instruction, but they were less likely to be satisfied with price.
- Beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions mentioned location reasons for choosing their institutions more often than reputation, price, or influence factors.

- As was the case with 4-year students, public 2-year students were generally satisfied with most aspects of their institutions. They were more likely than 4-year students to be satisfied with the price of attending.

C

Foreword

This report examines the factors that students who enrolled in postsecondary education for the first time in 1995–96 considered when choosing their institutions. It begins with a description of the enrollment patterns of these students. It then examines the reasons students reported for choosing the institution they attended and how the reasons varied according to student characteristics. Students at 4-year institutions are considered first, then students at public 2-year institutions. The report also describes student satisfaction with various aspects of their educational experiences such as their intellectual growth, the price of attending, and the prestige of the school.

The report uses data from the 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), a nationally representative study of students enrolled in all types of postsecondary institutions, from 4-year colleges and universities to less-than-2-year vocational institutions. NPSAS provides detailed information on students' backgrounds, their education expenses, and the sources and types of financial aid they receive. The study has been conducted four times—1986–87, 1989–90, 1992–93, and 1995–96—and will be conducted again in 1999–2000.

The analysis conducted for this report was limited to students who enrolled in postsecondary education for the first time during the 1995–96 academic year. These students, who constitute the basis for the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/98), were the only ones asked about reasons for selecting their institutions.

The estimates presented in the report were produced using the NPSAS:96 Undergraduate Data Analysis System (DAS). The DAS is a microcomputer application that allows users to specify and generate their own tables. This software system produces the design-adjusted standard errors necessary for testing the statistical significance of differences among estimates. Additional details are included in appendix B of this report, including how readers can obtain access to the DAS through the Internet.

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1. Introduction

Students beginning their postsecondary education have, at least theoretically, an almost overwhelming range of options. They can choose a baccalaureate program at a 4-year college or university, a certificate or an associate's degree program at a 2-year college, or a vocational program at a 2-year or less-than-2-year institution. They can attend a local institution, living at home or on their own; choose an in-state institution away from home; or move to a completely different part of the country. Depending on where students choose to enroll and live, the amount they pay for their education can vary widely. They may spend as little as a few hundred dollars for tuition, fees, and books if they attend a public 2-year institution and live at home, or more than $25,000 for tuition, room, and board if they attend certain private, not-for-profit institutions and live on campus.

As a practical matter, students' choices are constrained in a number of ways. In making their choices, students must take into account what they want to study relative to what different institutions offer, the admissions practices of the institutions they would like to attend, their financial resources, the availability of financial aid, and any family or work responsibilities that require them to live in a particular location or take classes on certain days or at certain times. Their choices may also be affected by family, school, and societal expectations about appropriate alternatives.[1] Even within these bounds, however, students typically still have options, although a single student from a wealthy family usually has a wider range of alternatives than a student with a family, a job, and limited financial resources.

What factors do prospective students take into consideration when deciding where to enroll? How do these factors vary with demographic, socioeconomic, and other student characteristics? Are students satisfied with their choices? These are the questions addressed in this report for students who enrolled in postsecondary education for the first time in 1995–96. Because the analysis includes only individuals who actually enrolled in postsecondary education, it can address the reasons students chose specific institutions, but not the reasons individuals chose to enroll or not enroll in postsecondary education.

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[1] P. McDonough, *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

The Choice Process

The approach students use to choose an institution has been described by many researchers as a three-stage process: it begins with a broad overview of postsecondary education opportunities available, followed by a search for information about possible institutions to form a choice set, and then a final choice phase when the student narrows the choice set down to a single institution.[2] Various institutional characteristics consistently have been found to be influential during this process, such as cost, distance from home, availability of financial aid (especially grants), and selectivity, as have student characteristics such as gender, race–ethnicity, parents' education, income, parental preferences, religion, and academic ability.[3]

Several NCES reports have examined the importance of various factors affecting student choice and how these factors vary with age and income. A study using the 1989–90 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:90) data found that the following were very important considerations for students in selecting an institution: the institution offered the course of study they wanted (cited by 73 percent); they could live at home (51 percent); they were able to go to school while working (51 percent); the institution had a good reputation (50 percent); and the institution was located close to home (43 percent).[4] Except for the institution's reputation, older students (24 years or older) were more likely than younger students to consider each of these factors important. For low-income students, obtaining the financial aid they needed was especially likely to be a very important consideration (45 percent reported that it was very important, versus 20 percent of other students).[5]

Although about 65 percent of all high school graduates now enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school,[6] and more enroll later on, not all students have equal access to the range of educational opportunities available, and not all postsecondary institutions provide the same programs. Thus, both where students enroll and why have important implications for understanding who receives what types of benefits of postsecondary education.

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[2] See, for example, D. Hossler and K.S. Gallagher, "Studying Student College Choice: A Three-Phase Model and Implications for Policymakers," *College and University*, 2 (1987): 207–221.

[3] For a summary of the evidence, see M. Paulsen, *College Choice: Understanding Student Enrollment Behavior* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 6) (Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development, 1990).

[4] S. Choy and M. Premo, *Profile of Older Undergraduates: 1989–90* (NCES 95-167) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).

[5] S. Choy and M. Premo, *How Low Income Undergraduates Financed Postsecondary Education: 1992–93* (NCES 96-161) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996).

[6] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1997* (Washington, D.C.: 1997), table 184.

Students' satisfaction with their choices can have implications for their persistence and attainment. Research suggests that whether or not a student stays enrolled in an institution is related to the degree to which the student fits in with the environment—that is, how the student engages with the academic and social systems of the institution and the extent to which the student is satisfied with institutional resources.[7] Thus, measures of students' satisfaction with various aspects of their institution can be useful to those concerned about increasing persistence and attainment in general or of specific subgroups (nontraditional students, for example, who tend have lower attainment rates than traditional students who enter college immediately after high school).[8]

Data

This study uses data on 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students (those who enrolled in postsecondary education for the first time in 1995–96), a subset of the 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96). NPSAS:96 is based on a nationally representative sample of all students enrolled in postsecondary education in 1995–96.

Students were asked in a telephone interview why they decided to attend the institution in which they enrolled, and they could provide as many reasons as they wanted. The interviewers coded their verbatim responses into 20 predetermined categories developed using information gathered from field tests. These 20 categories were then aggregated into four general categories as follows:

Location-related	Close to job Could live at home Close to home Liked the campus Other location reason
Reputation/school-related	School has a good reputation Job placement Facilities/equipment Faculty reputation Other reputation/school reason

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[7] E. Pascarella and P. Terenzini, *How College Affects Students* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1991).

[8] Forty-three percent of nontraditional students who began their postsecondary education in 1989–90 had attained some postsecondary credential by 1994, compared with 64 percent of traditional students. See L. Horn, *Nontraditional Undergraduates* (NCES 97-158) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996).

Price-related	Shorter time to finish
	Price of attendance was less
	Got more financial aid
	Tuition was low
	Other price reason
Influence-related	Parents went there
	Friends/spouse went there
	Parents wanted student to go there
	Teacher/guidance counselor recommended
	Other influence factors

After they gave all their reasons for selecting their institution, students were asked which of the reasons they mentioned was the most important in selecting the institution they were attending. From this information, a variable was created with 20 categories corresponding to the reasons listed above. For this analysis, these 20 values were grouped into the four aggregated categories indicated above.

Beginning postsecondary students were also asked to indicate if they were satisfied (yes or no) with various aspects of their first-year experiences in postsecondary education. These aspects fell into three general categories: 1) institutional characteristics, including the prestige of the institution, the overall campus climate regarding students of different racial or ethnic backgrounds, and the price of attending; 2) classroom instruction, including the availability of courses, class sizes, and the teaching ability of most of the instructors; and 3) students' personal experiences, including their intellectual growth and social life.

In addition, students were asked if they had participated in certain school-sponsored activities or used certain services including job placement services; sports and recreational facilities; counseling services for academic, financial aid, or personal issues; and music, art, and drama activities. If so, they were asked if they had been satisfied with them.

This study relies primarily on tabular analysis, disaggregating student college choice behavior and student satisfaction with postsecondary experiences by their demographic and enrollment characteristics. It examines separately students who enrolled in public 4-year institutions; private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions; and public 2-year institutions. This type of analysis provides useful information in determining overall patterns among different groups of students who enrolled in postsecondary education for the first time in 1995–96. However, it does not take into account the covariation of the independent variables. Several statistical methods are available to examine the relationships between two variables while holding other variables constant.

In this analysis, linear regression models were used to describe how a number of student characteristics were related to the reasons students mentioned as being most important in selecting the institution they were attending.

Organization of the Report

The next section of this report describes the enrollment patterns of the 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students and profiles the students who selected public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions and public 2-year institutions. The following two sections examine the reasons students reported for choosing the institution they attended and how these varied by student characteristics, first considering students at 4-year institutions and then students at public 2-year institutions. These sections also describe student satisfaction with various aspects of their educational experiences such as their intellectual growth, the price of attending, and the prestige of the school. A conclusion summarizes the major findings.

2. Enrollment Patterns

As background to the discussion of the reasons students gave for choosing their institutions, this section describes where 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students enrolled, first considering all students and then traditional and nontraditional students separately. It then profiles the beginning student population at each of the three major types of institutions: public 4-year; private, not-for-profit 4-year; and public 2-year.

All Students

The type of institution a prospective student chooses depends to a large extent on his or her educational goals. These goals might include earning a formal award such as a bachelor's degree, an associate's degree, or a certificate; obtaining job skills through course enrollment; or pursuing personal interests.

Individuals who want to earn a bachelor's degree typically enroll in a 4-year college or university if they have taken the required steps toward admission and have the necessary financial resources. These steps include successfully completing college preparatory courses in high school, taking college entrance examinations (the SAT or ACT) when required, completing the application process, and being accepted for admission.[9]

About 40 percent of undergraduates of all ages who enrolled in postsecondary education for the first time in 1995–96 decided on a public or private, not-for-profit 4-year institution (table 1). A greater proportion enrolled in public rather than private, not-for-profit institutions (25 percent versus 15 percent) (figure 1).

Prospective students who aspire to a bachelor's degree but have missed one of the required steps for admission or cannot afford to attend a 4-year institution can still reach their goal. They can make up their academic deficiencies, complete the required steps, and assemble the financial resources later, or they can enroll first at a 2-year institution and then transfer to a

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[9] For a discussion of access based on taking these steps, see L. Berkner, *Access to Postsecondary Education for the 1992 High School Graduates* (NCES 98-105) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).

Table 1—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students according to institution type: 1995–96

	Public less-than-2-year	Public 2-year	Public 4-year	Private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year	Private, not-for-profit 4-year	Private, for-profit
Total	1.9	45.7	25.4	1.3	14.5	11.3
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	1.9	49.1	25.8	1.5	13.9	7.9
Female	1.8	42.8	25.0	1.2	15.0	14.3
Age						
18 years or younger	0.7	39.3	34.0	0.9	20.3	4.9
19–23 years	1.6	46.7	25.2	1.5	13.0	12.1
24 years or older	4.9	58.0	6.7	2.0	4.3	24.0
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	2.0	47.1	26.0	1.2	14.9	8.7
Black, non-Hispanic	2.1	42.7	21.3	1.0	13.0	19.9
Hispanic	1.2	45.9	21.0	1.8	10.7	19.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.1	35.3	36.4	1.6	19.9	5.7
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.0	42.3	25.9	7.7	5.2	17.0
Single parent status						
Not a single parent	1.6	45.0	27.2	1.3	15.6	9.2
Single parent	4.5	52.4	7.0	1.6	2.7	31.9
Traditional/nontraditional status						
Traditional	0.7	27.6	41.5	0.9	25.6	3.7
Minimally nontraditional	1.4	53.7	24.2	1.4	10.3	9.2
Moderately nontraditional	3.4	60.7	9.2	1.8	5.1	19.8
Highly nontraditional	3.4	63.1	6.8	1.7	3.2	21.8
Dependency status						
Dependent	0.9	41.7	32.4	1.1	18.5	5.5
Independent, no dependents	4.8	56.7	9.6	1.9	6.4	20.6
Independent, with dependents	4.1	55.0	6.5	2.1	3.1	29.2
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	1.1	43.3	30.0	1.5	14.4	9.7
$30,000–69,999	1.0	44.0	32.2	0.9	17.6	4.5
$70,000 or more	0.3	35.7	35.8	0.9	25.3	2.1
Parents' education						
High school or less	2.6	50.2	19.8	1.6	9.4	16.4
Some postsecondary	1.7	52.2	25.2	1.4	11.2	8.2
Bachelor's degree	1.0	41.5	33.0	1.0	17.8	5.7
Advanced degree	0.1	26.7	37.9	0.5	32.2	2.5

Table 1—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students according to institution type: 1995–96 —Continued

	Public less-than-2-year	Public 2-year	Public 4-year	Private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year	Private, not-for-profit 4-year	Private, for-profit
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	0.0	21.3	45.3	2.0	29.8	1.6
900–1199	0.0	14.6	51.8	0.6	32.7	0.4
1200 or more	0.0	5.1	47.5	0.2	46.9	0.3
Missing	2.5	55.9	17.5	1.5	7.8	14.8
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	0.5	52.9	35.0	1.4	9.8	0.5
19–24	0.0	30.8	48.2	1.0	19.6	0.5
25 or more	0.0	12.1	55.1	0.2	32.2	0.4
Missing	2.4	49.7	18.7	1.5	12.9	14.9
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics						
Degree program						
Certificate or award	10.2	34.8	2.5	2.5	2.3	47.8
Associate's degree	—	87.2	3.9	2.0	1.6	5.3
Bachelor's degree	—	—	62.8	—	36.3	0.9
Undergraduate, nondegree program	0.1	83.8	9.1	1.6	3.1	2.3
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	2.0	31.4	32.3	1.4	19.1	13.8
Part-time	1.0	78.1	10.3	0.9	4.2	5.6
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	3.2	51.0	23.1	1.6	12.2	9.1
Loan aid	0.3	12.9	35.2	1.8	27.1	22.7
No aid	2.0	65.7	19.9	0.8	7.0	4.7
Primary role if working while enrolled						
Student working to meet expenses	1.2	46.2	27.5	1.1	16.8	7.2
Employee who has decided to enroll	2.1	68.8	10.0	1.5	4.8	12.8
Reason for enrolling						
Obtain job skills	7.3	52.8	(*)	2.7	(*)	37.2
Earn degree or certificate	1.6	81.4	(*)	2.4	(*)	14.6
Transfer to 4-year institution	0.0	97.9	(*)	1.2	(*)	0.8
Other	1.3	83.3	(*)	2.4	(*)	13.0

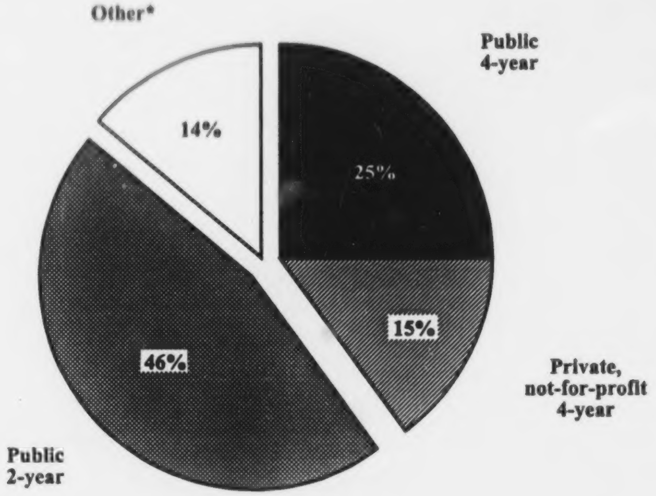
—Not applicable.

*Not asked of students attending 4-year institutions.

NOTE: Due to rounding, details may not sum to 100. Values of 0.0 indicate true values less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Figure 1—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students according to type of institution: 1995–96



*"Other" includes public less-than-2-year; private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year; and private, for-profit institutions.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

4-year college or university to complete their bachelor's degree.[10] Among 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students who enrolled in a less-than-4-year institution, 29 percent planned to transfer later to a 4-year institution (table 2).

Prospective students with postsecondary goals other than a bachelor's degree may have a variety of institutions from which to choose, depending on where they live and what they want to study. Their options typically include 2-year institutions or less-than-2-year institutions, although some 4-year institutions offer subbaccalaureate programs or permit nondegree enrollment as well.

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[10] For a discussion of transfer behavior, see A. McCormick, *Transfer Behavior Among Beginning Postsecondary Students: 1989–94* (NCES 97-266) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).

Table 2—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in less-than-4-year institutions according to reason for enrolling: 1995–96

	Job skills	Earn degree or certificate	Transfer to 4-year institution	Other
Total	33.0	20.3	28.9	17.8
Student characteristics				
Gender				
Male	29.1	17.7	33.8	19.5
Female	36.3	22.4	24.8	16.5
Age				
18 years or younger	19.5	19.1	44.5	17.0
19–23 years	28.7	22.6	30.7	18.0
24 years or older	54.4	18.8	8.1	18.6
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	31.3	19.5	30.6	18.7
Black, non-Hispanic	41.2	23.2	18.2	17.4
Hispanic	36.6	20.4	27.3	15.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	24.9	25.2	39.5	10.5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	27.9	9.4	40.7	22.0
Single parent status				
Not a single parent	29.5	20.5	32.4	17.7
Single parent	54.6	19.3	7.5	18.6
Traditional/nontraditional status				
Traditional	17.2	19.4	47.8	15.7
Minimally nontraditional	22.9	20.3	38.1	18.7
Moderately nontraditional	36.9	21.4	23.7	18.0
Highly nontraditional	50.8	19.8	10.6	18.9
Dependency status				
Dependent	20.7	19.9	41.6	17.9
Independent, no dependents	50.6	17.4	15.1	17.0
Independent, with dependents	50.7	22.8	8.4	18.2
Family income of dependent students				
Less than $30,000	25.2	24.1	31.5	19.2
$30,000–69,999	21.1	18.4	41.6	18.9
$70,000 or more	11.6	16.0	59.3	13.1
Parents' education				
High school or less	41.6	22.5	18.9	17.0
Some postsecondary	25.3	19.0	38.1	17.5
Bachelor's degree	17.8	15.1	48.6	18.5
Advanced degree	14.4	20.9	43.3	21.4

Table 2—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in less-than-4-year institutions according to reason for enrolling: 1995–96—Continued

	Job skills	Earn degree or certificate	Transfer to 4-year institution	Other
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics				
Degree program				
Certificate or award	67.5	17.0	2.6	13.0
Associate's degree	18.6	22.4	40.0	19.0
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	—
Undergraduate, nondegree program	29.4	8.4	28.7	33.5
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	34.7	20.4	30.1	14.8
Part-time	30.5	20.2	27.6	21.6
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	36.4	24.0	23.5	16.1
Loan aid	48.5	20.5	16.9	14.1
No aid	24.7	17.8	37.1	20.4
Primary role if working while enrolled				
Student working to meet expenses	22.2	20.3	41.6	16.0
Employee who has decided to enroll	40.1	21.7	17.2	21.1
Institutional characteristics				
Level of institution				
2-year	25.2	21.6	34.1	19.1
Less-than-2-year	74.7	13.5	0.6	11.2
Institution type				
Public less-than-2-year	80.8	11.2	0.2	7.8
Public 2-year	22.6	21.4	36.7	19.3
Private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year	41.1	22.9	16.2	19.8
Private, for-profit	69.0	16.6	1.3	13.0

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

NOTE: Due to rounding, details may not sum to 100.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Forty-six percent of 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students enrolled in a public 2-year institution (figure 1 and table 1). The remaining 14 percent attended public less-than-2-year; private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year; or private, for-profit institutions. Beginning postsecondary students at less-than-4-year institutions reported a variety of reasons for enrolling. In addition to the 29 percent already mentioned who were planning to transfer to a 4-year institution, 33 percent were seeking job skills; 20 percent wanted to earn an associate's degree or a certificate at the institution in which they were enrolled; and 18 percent had personal or other reasons for enrolling (table 2).

Traditional Versus Nontraditional Students

Where 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students enrolled—and their reasons for enrolling if they selected a less-than-4-year institution—were closely related to how "traditional" or "nontraditional" they were. For this analysis, nontraditional characteristics included delaying enrollment into postsecondary education after high school for a year or more; having no high school diploma or having a GED; enrolling part time; being financially independent; having dependents other than a spouse; being a single parent; and working full time while enrolled.[11] Students were characterized as traditional if they had none of these characteristics, minimally nontraditional if they had one, moderately nontraditional if they had two or three, and highly nontraditional if they had four or more. In the aggregate, 43 percent of beginning postsecondary students were traditional; 19 percent were minimally nontraditional; 21 percent were moderately nontraditional; and 17 percent were highly nontraditional (table 3).

Among traditional beginning postsecondary students, 67 percent enrolled in a 4-year institution (figure 2). Another 16 percent enrolled in a less-than-4-year institution but planned to transfer later to a 4-year institution. Thus, in total, at least three-quarters either attended or expected eventually to attend a 4-year institution.

Beginning postsecondary students who were minimally nontraditional were about half as likely as traditional students to attend a 4-year institution (35 percent), and moderately and highly nontraditional students were even less likely to do so (15 percent and 11 percent, respectively). Some minimally and moderately nontraditional beginning postsecondary students enrolled first in less-than-4-year institutions intending to transfer to 4-year institutions later (25 and 20 percent, respectively), but relatively few highly nontraditional students had such aspirations (9 percent). Among the highly nontraditional beginning postsecondary students, 45 percent enrolled in a less-than-4-year institution with the objective of obtaining job skills.

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[11] For a description of this categorization, see L. Horn, *Nontraditional Undergraduates* (NCES 97-578) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996).

Table 3—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students according to student characteristics and enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics: 1995–96

	Total	Public less-than-2-year	Public 2-year	Public 4-year	Private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year	Private, not-for-profit 4-year	Private, for-profit
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Student characteristics							
Gender							
Male	45.8	46.9	49.2	46.5	51.4	43.9	31.8
Female	54.2	53.1	50.8	53.5	48.6	56.1	68.2
Age							
18 years or younger	44.5	16.3	38.3	59.7	29.0	62.4	19.4
19–23 years	35.2	29.6	35.9	34.9	40.0	31.6	37.5
24 years or older	20.3	54.1	25.8	5.4	31.0	6.0	43.1
Race–ethnicity							
White, non-Hispanic	70.0	74.9	72.0	71.7	64.0	72.7	54.2
Black, non-Hispanic	12.5	14.0	11.6	10.5	9.6	11.3	22.0
Hispanic	11.6	7.1	11.7	9.6	15.9	8.6	20.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.1	3.0	4.0	7.3	6.1	7.1	2.6
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	4.5	0.3	1.2
Single parent status							
Not a single parent	90.8	77.6	89.5	97.5	89.3	98.3	74.2
Single parent	9.2	22.4	10.5	2.5	10.8	1.7	25.9
Traditional/nontraditional status							
Traditional	42.5	14.9	25.7	69.6	29.7	75.4	14.1
Minimally nontraditional	19.0	14.0	22.3	18.0	19.1	13.4	15.4
Moderately nontraditional	21.2	39.4	28.1	7.7	28.8	7.4	37.0
Highly nontraditional	17.3	31.7	23.9	4.6	22.4	3.8	33.4
Dependency status							
Dependent	71.6	32.7	65.4	91.4	56.6	91.5	34.9
Independent, no dependents	10.8	28.2	13.4	4.1	15.3	4.8	19.7
Independent, with dependents	17.6	39.1	21.2	4.5	28.1	3.7	45.4
Family income of dependent students							
Less than $30,000	31.5	42.2	32.7	29.1	43.5	24.5	55.4
$30,000–69,999	43.9	50.1	46.2	43.6	35.7	41.8	35.4
$70,000 or more	24.6	7.7	21.1	27.3	20.9	33.7	9.3
Parents' education							
High school or less	46.6	68.9	51.5	35.4	57.8	29.7	71.3
Some postsecondary	18.8	18.1	21.6	18.2	20.7	14.4	14.5
Bachelor's degree	20.2	11.9	18.4	25.5	15.7	24.4	10.9
Advanced degree	14.4	1.1	8.5	20.9	5.8	31.5	3.4

Table 3—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students according to student characteristics and enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics: 1995–96—Continued

	Total	Public less-than-2-year	Public 2-year	Public 4-year	Private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year	Private, not-for-profit 4-year	Private, for-profit
SAT-combined verbal and math							
Less than 900	7.8	0.1	3.6	13.9	11.5	16.0	1.1
900–1199	12.4	0.0	3.9	25.3	5.6	28.0	0.4
1200 or more	4.8	0.0	0.5	9.0	0.7	15.6	0.1
Missing	75.0	99.9	91.9	51.9	82.2	40.4	98.4
ACT composite score							
Less than 19	7.8	2.0	9.1	10.8	7.9	5.3	0.4
19–24	11.5	0.0	7.7	21.8	8.5	15.5	0.5
25 or more	5.5	0.0	1.5	11.9	0.9	12.2	0.2
Missing	75.2	98.0	81.8	55.5	82.7	67.0	99.0
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics							
Degree program							
Certificate or award	18.2	99.9	13.9	1.8	33.5	2.9	77.0
Associate's degree	42.1	—	80.4	6.5	62.8	4.7	19.6
Bachelor's degree	36.5	—	—	90.6	—	91.8	2.8
Undergraduate, nondegree program	3.1	0.1	5.7	1.1	3.6	0.7	0.6
Attendance intensity							
Full-time	69.3	81.8	47.6	87.7	78.5	91.2	84.8
Part-time	30.7	18.2	52.4	12.3	21.5	8.8	15.2
Aid status							
Aided, no loans	30.2	51.5	33.7	27.5	35.5	25.4	24.2
Loan aid	29.5	4.3	8.3	40.9	40.5	55.2	59.1
No aid	40.3	44.3	58.0	31.6	24.0	19.4	16.7
Worked while enrolled							
Yes	69.8	57.0	80.6	60.6	65.3	64.2	56.1
No	30.2	43.0	19.4	39.4	34.7	35.8	43.9
Primary role if working while enrolled							
Student working to meet expenses	71.1	59.1	62.3	87.1	64.5	89.6	57.9
Employee who has decided to enroll	28.9	40.9	37.7	12.9	35.5	10.4	42.1
Reason for enrolling							
Obtain job skills	33.0	80.8	22.6	(*)	41.1	(*)	69.0
Earn degree or certificate	20.3	11.2	21.4	(*)	22.9	(*)	16.6
Transfer to 4-year institution	28.9	0.2	36.7	(*)	16.2	(*)	1.3
Other	17.8	7.8	19.3	(*)	19.8	(*)	13.0

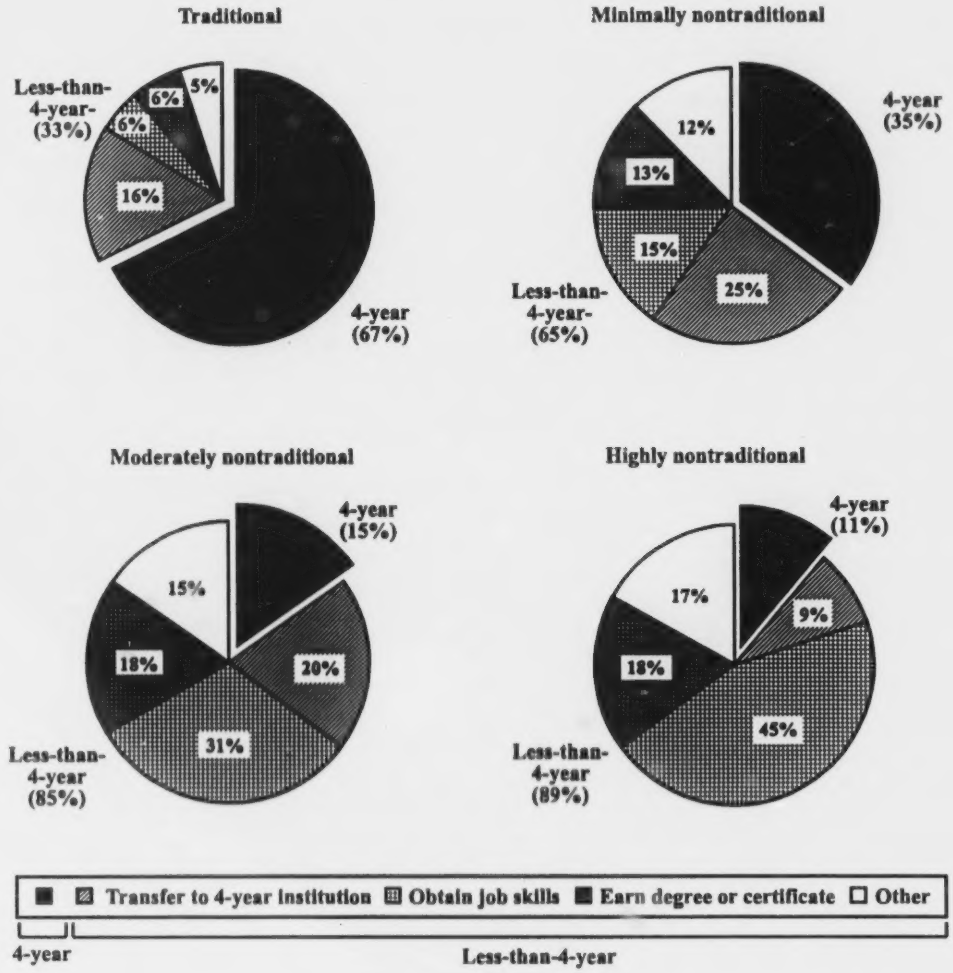
—Not applicable.

*Not asked of students attending 4-year institutions.

NOTE: Unlike other tables in the report, the columns in this table sum to 100 for the categories of a given variable rather than the rows. Due to rounding, details may not sum to 100. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Figure 2—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students according to the type of institution attended and reason for attending a less-than-4-year institution, by traditional/nontraditional status: 1995–96



NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Students Enrolled at 4-Year Institutions

Public 4-Year Institutions

Public 4-year institutions serve a primarily traditional student population: 70 percent of the 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students who enrolled in a public 4-year institution were traditional, and another 18 percent were minimally nontraditional (that is, had just one characteristic associated with nontraditional status) (table 3). About 95 percent were under 24 years of age, and 91 percent were financially dependent on their parents for financial aid purposes (figure 3). Eighty-eight percent enrolled full time (table 3).

Women outnumbered men (54 percent were female), and 72 percent of all beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year institutions were white, non-Hispanic. Black, non-Hispanics made up 11 percent of the beginning postsecondary student population at public 4-year institutions; Hispanics, 10 percent; and Asian/Pacific Islanders, 7 percent. About two-thirds of the students had parents with at least some postsecondary education, and 21 percent of them had parents with an advanced degree (figure 3).

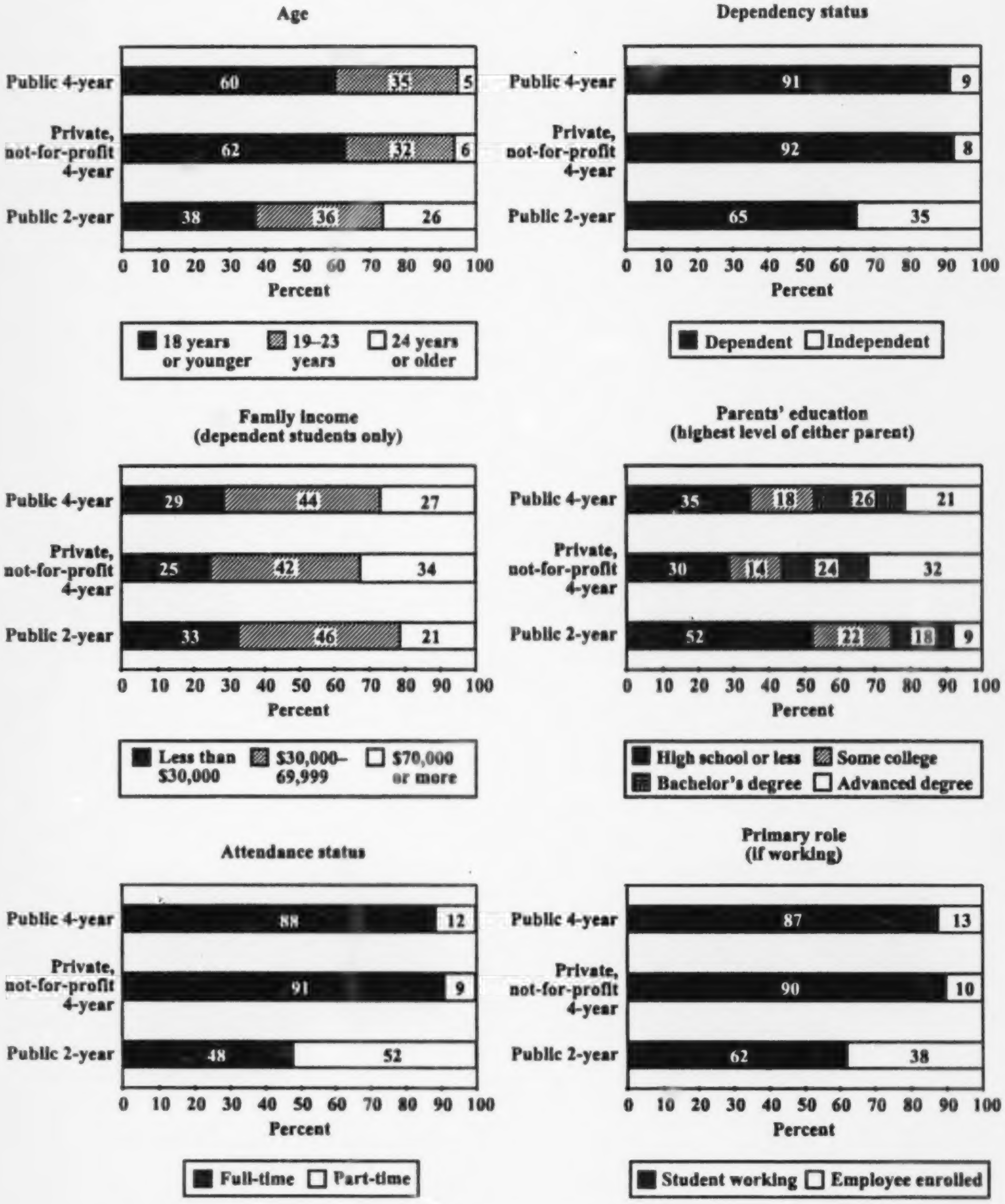
Dependent beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year institutions came from families in all income ranges: 29 percent were from families with incomes less than $30,000; 44 percent were from families with incomes between $30,000 and $69,999; and 27 percent were from families with incomes of $70,000 or more. About one-third (32 percent) of all beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year institutions (dependent and independent) attended with no financial aid (table 3). Another 28 percent received an aid package without loans (that is, they received grants and/or work study only), and the remaining 41 percent had an aid package with loans (table 3).

The majority of students (61 percent) worked while enrolled. Of these students, 87 percent considered themselves primarily students working to meet their expenses rather than employees who enrolled to take classes.

Private, Not-for-Profit 4-Year Institutions

Beginning postsecondary students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were similar in many ways to their public sector counterparts (table 3 and figure 3). The gender, age, and racial–ethnic makeup of the student populations at the two types of institutions was very similar, and comparable percentages of students were financially dependent for financial aid purposes

Figure 3—Percentage distributions of beginning postsecondary students with various characteristics, by type of institution: 1995–96



NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

(about 91 percent). Beginning students at both types of institutions were about equally likely to work while enrolled (about 6 out of 10), and, if they worked, to consider themselves primarily students working to meet expenses (about 9 out of 10).

Their family backgrounds differed slightly, however. Beginning postsecondary students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely than those at public 4-year institutions to come from families with incomes of $70,000 or more (if they were dependent) and more likely to have parents with an advanced degree.

In 1995–96, the average tuition was higher at private, not-for-profit than at public 4-year institutions.[12] Dependent students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely than their counterparts at public 4-year institutions to come from high-income families, but students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions (dependent and independent together) were less likely than those at public 4-year institutions to attend without aid (19 percent versus 32 percent) (table 3). Beginning students at the two types of 4-year institutions were about equally likely to receive an aid package without loans (about one-quarter), but students at private, not-for-profit institutions were more likely than those at public institutions to take out loans (55 percent versus 41 percent).

Students Enrolled at Public 2-Year Institutions

Public 2-year institutions frequently schedule evening classes, enroll part-time students, and generally charge lower tuition than 4-year institutions. For these reasons, they often serve individuals who have family or work responsibilities that limit the amount of time they have to attend classes and the financial resources they have to support their attendance.

Beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions were much more likely than students at either public or private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to have characteristics associated with "nontraditional" college students. Specifically, students at public 2-year institutions were more likely to be 24 years or older, single parents, financially independent of their parents for financial aid purposes, and enrolled part time (table 3 and figure 3). They were also more likely to have parents with no more than a high school education. If they worked, they were more likely than students at 4-year institutions to consider themselves primarily employees taking classes than students working to meet expenses. If they were dependent, students at public 2-year institutions were more likely than those at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to be from families with lower incomes (less than $30,000).

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[12] In 1995–96, the average tuition for students who attended full time, full year was $12,600 at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, and $3,800 at public 4-year institutions. See L. Berkner, *Student Financing of Undergraduate Education, 1995–96* (NCES 98-076) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, forthcoming).

Beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions for a variety of reasons. Thirty-seven percent planned to transfer to a 4-year institution, the most frequent reason for enrolling (table 3). Another 23 percent enrolled to obtain job skills, and 21 percent planned to earn a degree or certificate at the 2-year institution. The remaining 19 percent enrolled for other reasons such as personal enrichment or to transfer to an institution other than a 4-year one.

Once students decide on the type of postsecondary education they are going to pursue, they must next identify a set of institutions that might meet their needs and then finally narrow this set down to a single institution. They make this choice based on their individual preferences and financial circumstances, constrained of course by the admissions decisions of the institutions to which they apply.[13] The rest of this report focuses on the reasons why beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year, private, not-for-profit 4-year, and public 2-year institutions chose the institutions they attended.

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[13] P. McDonough, *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity.*

3. Choosing a 4-Year Institution

In NPSAS:96, beginning postsecondary students were asked why they decided to attend their institution. As described in the Introduction, their verbatim responses were coded into 20 categories. These 20 categories were then aggregated into four: reputation/school-related, location-related, price-related, and influence-related. Students could give more than one reason for their choice of institution. The specific reasons students at 4-year institutions gave and how the reasons varied by type of institution and student characteristics are described in this section. Also discussed is the extent to which students were satisfied with various aspects of the institutions they attended.

Factors Affecting Choice

The majority (63 percent) of beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions gave at least one reputation/school-related reason for choosing their institution (figure 4). A majority also cited at least one location-related reason (58 percent). A considerably smaller percentage (26 percent) gave reasons related to price, and even fewer (21 percent) mentioned the influence of friends, teachers, counselors, or others.

The relatively low mention given to the price of attending does not support the findings of other researchers that the price of going to college affects not only whether students enroll but also where they go.[14] In addition, the rising public concern over college tuition[15] makes it difficult to conclude that the price of attending is not a factor in students' college decisions. One possible explanation for the relatively low percentage of students mentioning price is that in developing their "choice set," students include only those institutions they think they can afford or that their parents had identified as affordable. They may have answered the question about reasons for choosing their institution in the context of making a final choice from the set of institutions that had already been narrowed down to those they considered as financially feasible to attend. It is also possible that, at least for some students, financial aid provided sufficient assistance that they were indifferent to price differences among the institutions they were considering.

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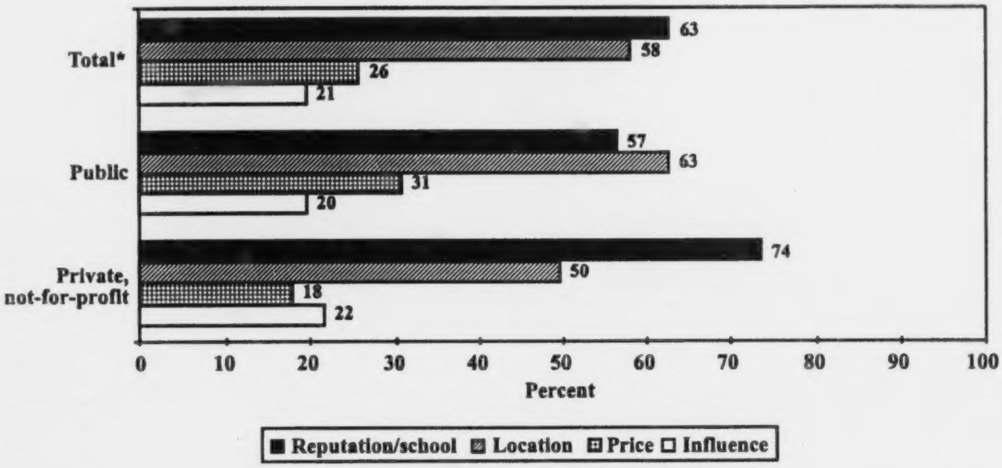
[14] M. McPherson and M. Shapiro, *Keeping College Affordable* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1991).

[15] National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education, *Straight Talk About College Costs and Prices* (Washington, D.C.: 1998).

Figure 4—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions who gave various types of reasons for choosing their institution, by type of institution: 1995–96



*Includes students at public; private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit 4-year institutions.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Finally, the percentage of students citing price reasons may understate the percentage considering the price of attending because of the way in which students articulated the reasons for their choices. For example, some location-related reasons (living at home, for example) may actually indicate price concerns, because living at home while enrolled is a way of reducing the price of attending.

The fact that relatively few students reported the influence of others as being a factor in their decision is somewhat inconsistent with the observed importance of parents, high school personnel, and community values in determining where students go to college.[16] As with price-related reasons, however, influence factors may play a prominent role in determining whether an individual goes to college and the set of alternatives a student considers, but may be less important in his or her final choice. Students who have defined their options as a set of state universities, for example, or a set of private colleges where they are likely to be admitted, might have had parents, teachers, and guidance counselors help them in identifying this group of institutions. However, they may view their final choice of a specific institution as their own, determined by other considerations. Also, influence factors, like price factors, might be partially reflected in other responses (like being close to home).

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[16] P. McDonough, *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity.*

Students who enrolled at public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions tended to use different criteria to pick the institution they attended. The frequency with which students mentioned various reasons for selecting their institution and the most important reasons they reported also differed according to their family background, enrollment characteristics, financial aid status, and work status. These patterns are discussed next.

Reputation/School-Related Reasons

Some students using reputation as a criterion for deciding to attend a particular institution have in mind its general reputation as a high-quality institution. Other students have more specific reputation/school-related reasons for their choices. For example, they might focus on the reputation of the faculty, campus facilities, or the availability of particular programs or majors. Similarly, students with well-defined academic interests might focus on an institution's offerings and reputation in their anticipated major field of study. Students might also choose an institution partly because of the way instruction is organized—class sizes or the types of course-taking requirements, for example.

As already indicated, 63 percent of all beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions cited at least one reputation/school-related reason for their choice of institution (table 4). Thirty-five percent reported that the institution's good reputation was a factor in their decision, and 28 percent reported "other" reputation/school-related reasons. As just described, these other reasons might include the institution's program offerings in a specific area or its teaching methods, for example. Relatively small percentages mentioned other reputation/school-related characteristics such as faculty, facilities, or job placement (no more than 6 percent).

Beginning postsecondary students attending private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were especially likely to give a reputation-related reason for choosing their institution compared with those attending public 4-year institutions (74 percent versus 57 percent). They were also more likely than their counterparts at public 4-year institutions to mention each of the specific reputation-related reasons—the school's good reputation, facilities, faculty reputation, and job placement—and also "other" reputation/school-related reasons.

Table 4—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who chose their institution for reputation/school-related reasons: 1995–96

	Any reputation/ school-related reason	School has good reputation	Job placement	Facilities/ equipment	Faculty reputation	Other reputation/ school reason
Total*	63.2	35.2	2.4	5.6	4.2	28.1
			Public 4-year			
Total	57.3	31.8	1.6	4.8	2.9	23.9
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	58.2	32.3	1.3	5.3	2.8	24.4
Female	56.6	31.4	1.9	4.5	3.0	23.4
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	57.7	32.1	1.9	5.3	2.9	23.5
Black, non-Hispanic	54.0	27.8	1.5	2.5	2.8	25.6
Hispanic	55.4	33.7	0.6	4.6	2.7	22.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	58.5	29.9	0.2	4.1	3.3	27.5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	50.5	41.6	1.1	3.3	0.0	8.8
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	56.7	31.2	1.1	4.6	3.6	24.6
$30,000–69,999	55.9	31.5	2.1	4.6	2.3	22.9
$70,000 or more	62.8	36.4	1.2	5.6	3.2	25.2
Parents' education						
High school or less	53.9	28.2	1.7	5.3	2.8	22.8
Some postsecondary	58.5	32.0	1.6	3.8	2.9	25.3
Bachelor's degree	57.7	31.1	2.2	4.8	3.0	24.2
Advanced degree	63.6	39.4	1.2	5.0	3.2	24.2
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	56.3	30.2	1.4	4.1	3.4	24.2
900–1199	60.4	37.6	1.0	5.5	2.3	24.7
1200 or more	68.5	42.3	1.3	6.5	3.9	21.8
Missing	54.1	27.5	2.0	4.4	2.9	23.7
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	51.8	26.9	1.6	5.5	3.2	20.8
19–24	52.3	26.1	1.6	5.5	2.8	23.6
25 or more	61.4	38.2	3.0	5.8	3.2	19.5
Missing	59.6	33.7	1.3	4.2	2.8	25.6
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	58.4	32.4	1.7	5.0	2.9	24.6
Part-time	50.6	27.9	0.9	3.9	3.2	18.9
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	59.9	33.0	1.8	5.5	2.9	24.1
Loan aid	57.8	31.3	1.9	4.6	3.5	25.2
No aid	54.4	31.5	1.0	4.7	2.1	21.8

Table 4—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who chose their institution for reputation/school-related reasons: 1995–96—Continued

	Any reputation/ school-related reason	School has good reputation	Job placement	Facilities/ equipment	Faculty reputation	Other reputation/ school reason
			Private, not-for-profit 4-year			
Total	73.6	41.8	3.5	6.7	6.4	35.3
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	71.4	39.9	4.4	6.8	5.7	34.6
Female	75.4	43.2	2.8	6.6	7.1	35.8
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	75.5	43.1	4.2	6.7	6.9	36.1
Black, non-Hispanic	60.6	29.4	2.7	4.8	6.5	30.0
Hispanic	76.9	50.4	0.5	8.7	1.2	37.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	72.4	40.7	0.7	9.0	5.8	33.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	68.8	38.9	1.9	8.2	4.9	32.6
$30,000–69,999	77.4	42.8	4.1	6.4	8.1	38.3
$70,000 or more	74.1	43.3	3.8	6.9	4.9	34.9
Parents' education						
High school or less	68.0	34.1	3.2	6.3	6.2	34.2
Some postsecondary	74.6	43.7	4.1	6.0	5.5	37.8
Bachelor's degree	75.9	41.4	5.2	8.8	5.7	34.1
Advanced degree	76.1	48.1	2.2	5.4	8.1	35.7
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	68.9	31.1	3.6	8.8	5.6	39.7
900–1199	78.6	44.2	3.9	7.6	5.8	40.1
1200 or more	79.6	56.8	2.4	6.6	5.5	29.2
Missing	69.5	38.1	3.7	5.2	7.7	32.4
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	67.4	26.8	3.8	5.6	8.2	36.0
19–24	71.2	37.9	4.4	6.1	8.8	35.9
25 or more	73.6	47.9	4.4	6.0	7.6	30.9
Missing	74.8	42.8	3.1	7.1	5.4	35.9
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	74.8	42.5	3.5	7.0	6.2	35.9
Part-time	60.9	33.7	3.8	3.8	9.6	28.6
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	66.6	37.6	3.2	5.0	7.1	34.2
Loan aid	76.8	41.8	4.1	7.7	7.3	36.4
No aid	72.9	46.8	2.1	5.8	3.1	33.1

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*Includes public; private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit institutions.

NOTE: Students could name more than one reason. Thus, columns do not sum to the total. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Considering an institution's reputation as a good school was associated with having well-educated parents and high admission test scores. At both types of 4-year institutions, students whose parents had an advanced degree were more likely than those whose parents had no more than a high school diploma to cite this reason. Also, at both types of institutions, students with high SAT and ACT scores (1200 or more and 25 or more, respectively) were more likely than those with low scores (less than 900 or less than 19, respectively) to mention the school's good reputation as a reason for choosing it.

Location-Related Reasons

Location-related reasons can include proximity or distance. Some students who cite location as a factor in their choice of institution may be looking for an institution close to their home or job because family or work responsibilities make convenient access to a campus crucial. Others may want to remain close to home to maintain close ties with their family and friends or to be assured that they could get home quickly and inexpensively for vacations or in case of emergency. Other students focusing on location might be looking for an institution far away from home for the experience of living on campus or on their own. Some students may have very specific location criteria and want to be in a particular part of the country or in a location that affords them ready access to desired amenities such as recreational opportunities or cultural activities.

A majority (58 percent) of beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions gave at least one location-related reason for choosing their institution (table 5). The most frequently cited reason was being close to home (given by 32 percent). Similar reasons—being able to live at home or being close to their job—were given by 5 percent and 1 percent of the students, respectively.[17] Sixteen percent cited liking the campus as a reason for choosing their institution, and 12 percent reported an "other" location-related reason.

Location was more likely to be a factor in choosing an institution for students attending public 4-year institutions (63 percent) than for those attending private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions (50 percent). Compared with students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, students at public 4-year institutions were more likely to mention being close to home (38 percent versus 21 percent) and being able to live at home (7 percent versus 3 percent) as factors in their choice of institution. However, students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions gave one particular location-related reason—liking the campus—slightly more often than their public 4-year counterparts (18 percent versus 14 percent).

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[17] It is important to keep in mind that students could have given more than one of these reasons. Thus, these percentages cannot be added together to indicate the percentage who gave proximity as a reason.

Table 5—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who chose their institution for location-related reasons: 1995–96

	Any location-related reason	Close to home	Could live at home	Liked the campus	Close to job	Other location reason
Total*	58.0	31.7	5.3	15.6	0.8	12.2
Public 4-year						
Total	63.2	37.9	6.7	14.3	1.0	11.4
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	58.8	36.0	6.2	12.6	0.8	9.5
Female	67.1	39.5	7.2	15.9	1.1	13.2
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	65.3	38.2	6.9	15.5	0.9	11.8
Black, non-Hispanic	58.8	37.7	5.4	11.8	1.4	10.6
Hispanic	60.4	39.7	7.3	11.3	0.5	10.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	49.9	32.9	4.7	10.1	1.8	9.9
American Indian/Alaskan Native	74.3	30.4	19.0	23.2	0.0	15.9
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	61.5	41.4	7.8	10.0	1.2	8.0
$30,000–69,999	64.6	38.7	6.5	15.1	0.5	12.4
$70,000 or more	63.8	30.3	5.6	21.2	0.4	14.8
Parents' education						
High school or less	65.5	43.6	6.8	11.8	1.1	9.6
Some postsecondary	64.6	42.0	8.4	11.4	1.4	9.8
Bachelor's degree	61.0	33.1	6.3	18.6	0.6	13.0
Advanced degree	62.0	31.7	4.9	16.6	0.7	14.6
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	61.4	39.9	6.4	15.9	1.1	9.5
900–1199	64.1	32.4	6.0	17.1	0.8	15.6
1200 or more	60.9	29.3	5.1	18.2	0.4	15.1
Missing	63.7	41.5	7.5	11.8	1.1	9.2
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	66.0	45.7	7.9	10.7	0.5	8.0
19–24	70.1	45.8	7.2	15.9	1.0	9.4
25 or more	64.1	34.7	8.1	14.9	1.1	12.0
Missing	59.6	33.7	5.9	14.3	1.0	12.9
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	62.9	36.5	6.0	15.5	0.6	12.3
Part-time	65.6	47.4	11.5	7.0	3.7	5.7
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	59.7	37.3	9.1	11.3	0.8	8.1
Loan aid	65.0	38.7	4.7	16.1	1.2	12.9
No aid	63.9	37.2	7.4	14.6	0.8	12.3

Table 5—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who chose their institution for location-related reasons: 1995–96—Continued

	Any location-related reason	Close to home	Could live at home	Liked the campus	Close to job	Other location reason
			Private, not-for-profit 4-year			
Total	49.5	21.1	2.9	18.2	0.5	13.6
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	45.1	19.6	2.6	16.1	0.9	11.5
Female	53.0	22.3	3.2	19.8	0.2	15.2
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	51.1	20.7	2.7	19.8	0.7	14.2
Black, non-Hispanic	44.0	23.4	4.6	11.8	0.2	8.2
Hispanic	45.5	23.5	1.4	15.2	0.0	11.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	46.5	21.0	3.6	14.4	0.0	16.7
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	50.0	22.4	3.9	17.9	0.7	12.6
$30,000–69,999	45.2	20.1	3.4	16.6	0.1	11.8
$70,000 or more	55.1	17.7	1.3	24.3	0.4	18.8
Parents' education						
High school or less	51.8	30.7	5.0	14.3	0.8	8.0
Some postsecondary	42.7	16.0	4.6	17.6	1.1	11.7
Bachelor's degree	48.9	18.6	1.9	18.4	0.3	15.6
Advanced degree	50.4	15.6	1.4	22.0	0.3	17.5
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	45.0	19.5	4.1	13.1	0.6	12.7
900–1199	51.7	19.9	2.3	19.8	0.7	17.4
1200 or more	57.9	15.0	1.5	27.1	0.0	22.5
Missing	46.3	25.2	3.4	15.4	0.5	7.3
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	50.0	27.2	5.7	24.2	1.2	4.2
19–24	50.1	22.8	3.3	17.4	0.0	10.9
25 or more	52.1	20.1	2.5	21.8	0.5	14.2
Missing	48.8	20.3	2.6	17.2	0.6	14.9
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	49.5	20.7	2.7	18.5	0.4	14.4
Part-time	49.4	25.7	5.2	15.0	2.2	3.6
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	48.2	24.3	3.8	15.2	0.9	10.8
Loan aid	48.0	20.2	2.7	18.0	0.5	13.6
No aid	55.8	19.8	2.3	22.5	0.3	16.9

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*Includes public; private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit institutions.

NOTE: Students could name more than one reason. Thus, columns do not sum to the total. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Specific location-related reasons varied with income among dependent students at both public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions. At public 4-year institutions, dependent students were about equally likely to have a location-related reason for choosing their institution regardless of income, but their reasons differed. Compared with those in other income categories, dependent students from families with incomes of at least $70,000 were more likely to choose their institutions because they liked the campus, and less likely to want to be close to home.

At private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, dependent students from families with incomes of at least $70,000 were more likely than those with incomes from $30,000 to 69,999 to cite liking the campus as a reason for choosing their institution (24 percent versus 17 percent). At this upper income level ($70,000 or more), students from public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were about equally likely to cite liking the campus as a reason for choosing their institution (21 and 24 percent, respectively). At private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, students with SAT scores of 1200 or more were more likely than those with scores of less than 900 to cite liking the campus as a reason for their choice of institution.

Price-Related Reasons

As discussed earlier, the price of attending may help define the set of institutions students consider to be open to them, with students seriously considering only those institutions they think they can afford. Only students from wealthy families or who have other sources of funds or are awarded substantial amounts of financial aid can afford to ignore price completely in making their decisions. In fact, research on price and choice has shown that as net prices rise, the enrollment of lower income students tends to shift to less expensive colleges.[18]

About one-quarter (26 percent) of all beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions gave at least one price-related reason for choosing their institution (table 6). This reason was expressed in general terms—some version of "the price of attending was less"—by 11 percent of students. Seven percent of students specifically mentioned that they got more financial aid, and 5 percent mentioned lower tuition.

Price-related reasons were mentioned much more often by students attending public as opposed to private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions (31 percent versus 18 percent). Furthermore, students at the two types of institutions had different price considerations. Of the various types of price-related reasons, students at public 4-year institutions were most likely to give a general

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[18] M. Tierney, "Student Matriculation Decisions and Financial Aid," *Journal of Higher Education* 3 (1980): 14–25; M. McPherson and M. Schapiro, *Keeping College Affordable* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1991), 44–56.

Table 6—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who chose their institution for price-related reasons: 1995–96

	Any price-related reason	Price of attendance was less	Tuition was low	Got more financial aid	Shorter time to finish	Other price reason
Total*	26.2	10.7	5.3	6.9	0.3	4.1
			Public 4-year			
Total	31.1	15.4	7.8	4.6	0.2	4.8
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	32.0	16.0	8.2	4.2	0.2	5.3
Female	30.3	14.9	7.4	4.9	0.2	4.3
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	32.7	16.2	8.3	4.7	0.2	5.0
Black, non-Hispanic	25.6	9.2	6.2	5.6	0.4	5.6
Hispanic	32.8	18.7	7.1	4.3	0.8	4.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	23.6	13.9	5.8	2.6	0.0	2.2
American Indian/Alaskan Native	23.9	19.1	1.9	2.9	0.0	0.0
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	29.8	14.5	6.8	4.5	0.0	5.9
$30,000–69,999	34.1	16.3	8.3	5.6	0.2	5.3
$70,000 or more	29.2	14.0	8.5	4.0	0.1	4.1
Parents' education						
High school or less	29.4	14.4	7.5	4.5	0.4	4.6
Some postsecondary	27.1	12.3	8.6	4.0	0.0	3.6
Bachelor's degree	32.7	17.5	5.8	5.2	0.2	5.6
Advanced degree	34.4	17.0	9.3	4.7	0.1	4.8
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	20.6	12.0	4.0	3.1	0.0	2.5
900–1199	32.7	17.1	7.3	5.6	0.0	5.1
1200 or more	46.8	20.6	14.0	6.7	0.3	8.3
Missing	30.5	14.7	8.0	4.1	0.4	4.7
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	26.6	15.5	5.2	2.5	0.0	4.4
19–24	29.7	13.7	9.1	3.5	0.3	4.3
25 or more	45.1	17.5	10.9	11.6	0.0	8.5
Missing	29.3	15.7	7.0	3.8	0.3	4.2
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	31.5	15.4	8.0	4.9	0.2	4.8
Part-time	28.1	15.3	5.9	2.3	0.2	4.6
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	38.7	16.3	7.5	9.6	0.2	7.8
Loan aid	29.0	14.6	7.8	3.8	0.3	4.3
No aid	27.2	15.8	7.9	1.2	0.2	2.8

Table 6—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who chose their institution for price-related reasons: 1995–96—Continued

	Any price-related reason	Price of attendance was less	Tuition was low	Got more financial aid	Shorter time to finish	Other price reason
			Private, not-for-profit 4-year			
Total	17.8	2.6	1.2	11.4	0.3	3.0
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	17.6	3.2	1.5	10.6	0.3	2.5
Female	18.0	2.1	0.9	12.0	0.3	3.3
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	17.2	2.6	1.2	10.9	0.2	2.9
Black, non-Hispanic	21.1	2.3	1.3	14.2	0.3	3.1
Hispanic	20.6	4.8	0.5	12.2	0.8	2.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	17.5	1.1	1.6	11.4	0.9	4.2
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	21.4	2.5	1.0	15.2	0.3	2.9
$30,000–69,999	20.7	3.5	0.9	13.9	0.1	3.1
$70,000 or more	13.5	1.6	1.6	7.4	0.4	2.8
Parents' education						
High school or less	17.0	1.9	0.6	11.6	0.3	3.0
Some postsecondary	18.1	3.0	0.6	10.4	0.9	3.9
Bachelor's degree	19.9	3.3	1.2	13.6	0.2	2.2
Advanced degree	16.9	2.4	1.6	10.1	0.1	3.3
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	17.7	3.7	0.9	9.3	0.2	3.9
900–1199	18.0	2.2	1.2	12.8	0.3	2.5
1200 or more	22.1	1.6	0.3	17.0	0.3	3.2
Missing	15.9	2.8	1.6	8.8	0.2	2.9
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	14.4	0.6	0.0	10.1	0.0	3.8
19–24	16.9	2.8	1.3	10.5	0.0	2.5
25 or more	28.4	3.4	3.5	17.4	0.0	5.9
Missing	16.2	2.5	0.8	10.5	0.4	2.5
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	18.5	2.5	1.2	12.1	0.3	2.9
Part-time	10.0	3.0	0.4	3.1	0.0	3.7
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	25.5	3.8	1.2	14.6	0.2	6.8
Loan aid	19.7	2.8	1.4	13.4	0.4	2.2
No aid	2.5	0.4	0.2	1.2	0.0	0.7

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*Includes public; private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit institutions.

NOTE: Students could name more than one reason. Thus, columns do not sum to the total. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

reason—some version of "the price of attending was less" (15 percent). In contrast, students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions mentioned getting financial aid more often than any other price-related reason (11 percent).

Among dependent beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year institutions, similar percentages in each income group gave a price-related reason for attending their institution (29 to 34 percent). Previous research cited above[19] might suggest that price would be considered more often by lower income families. However, as already suggested, students may have reported their reasons for choosing from a narrow range of options. Price may have been an important consideration at the point in the decision process when realistic options were being identified, but less important at the final decision stage. In addition, financial aid serves to equalize financial resources for college across income levels.[20] Furthermore, perceptions of affordability are subjective. For example, a lower income family might be willing to make enormous sacrifices to cover the price of their child's attending a specific college and therefore consider it affordable, while another family, wealthier but with different spending priorities, considers it unaffordable.[21] Also, the extent to which specific prices are a concern for families at particular income levels will depend on whether they saved for college as well as on their income. A family with a modest income that began saving early might not have to be as concerned about price as a family with a higher income but no savings.

At private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, dependent students from families with incomes less than $70,000 were more likely than those from higher income families to cite a price-related reason (21 percent versus 14 percent). The major difference was in the percentage who cited getting more financial aid as a reason for their choice of institution. However, since students from families with incomes of $70,000 or more are not eligible for as much financial aid as those with lower incomes, it is logical that financial aid receipt would be less of a consideration in their choice.

Influence-Related Reasons

The percentages of beginning postsecondary students at public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions who mentioned an influence-related reason for choosing their institution were similar (20 and 22 percent, respectively) (table 7). Seven percent of the students at public 4-year

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[19] M. McPherson and M. Schapiro, *Keeping College Affordable.*

[20] See, for example, J. Tuma and S. Geis, *Student Financing of Undergraduate Education, 1992–93* (NCES 95-202) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).

[21] M. Mumper, *Removing College Price Barriers* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 193.

Table 7—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who chose their institution for influence-related reasons: 1995–96

	Any influence-related reason	Friends or spouse attended	Parents attended	Parents wanted student to attend	Teacher or counselor recom-mended	Other influence factors
Total*	20.9	6.2	2.5	1.2	0.9	11.5
			Public 4-year			
Total	20.1	6.7	2.4	1.4	0.6	10.0
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	21.2	7.3	2.5	1.0	0.5	10.7
Female	19.2	6.2	2.3	1.8	0.7	9.5
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	19.3	7.3	2.4	1.1	0.5	8.9
Black, non-Hispanic	27.3	7.5	3.3	2.8	0.9	14.3
Hispanic	16.6	2.2	1.3	1.2	0.5	11.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	20.6	4.3	0.6	2.3	1.2	13.1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	26.1	6.3	5.1	1.8	0.0	19.0
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	18.7	6.0	1.6	1.2	1.1	9.7
$30,000–69,999	20.0	6.4	2.2	1.8	0.5	10.0
$70,000 or more	21.5	8.0	3.7	1.3	0.3	9.4
Parents' education						
High school or less	19.2	6.7	0.6	1.1	0.7	11.0
Some postsecondary	18.4	6.4	1.2	1.5	0.5	9.3
Bachelor's degree	20.9	6.5	2.9	1.3	0.6	10.9
Advanced degree	22.9	8.0	5.5	2.5	0.4	7.9
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	19.1	6.9	1.6	1.1	0.5	9.5
900–1199	18.1	5.4	2.6	1.7	0.6	8.6
1200 or more	14.1	4.7	3.6	1.2	0.5	4.8
Missing	22.5	7.7	2.2	1.4	0.6	11.8
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	26.1	7.9	3.7	1.4	0.7	14.0
19–24	21.2	8.9	1.9	1.6	0.6	9.4
25 or more	16.1	5.8	1.6	0.6	0.4	8.7
Missing	19.4	5.7	2.4	1.6	0.6	9.8
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	20.1	6.8	2.5	1.4	0.6	9.7
Part-time	20.2	6.3	1.3	1.5	0.3	12.0
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	17.1	5.3	2.0	1.0	0.6	9.2
Loan aid	20.0	7.1	2.2	1.3	0.7	9.5
No aid	23.1	7.4	2.9	2.0	0.4	11.5

Table 7—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who chose their institution for influence-related reasons: 1995–96—Continued

	Any influence-related reason	Friends or spouse attended	Parents attended	Parents wanted student to attend	Teacher or counselor recommended	Other influence factors
			Private, not-for-profit 4-year			
Total	22.4	5.3	2.9	0.9	1.5	14.0
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	22.6	5.7	2.3	1.1	2.2	14.0
Female	22.3	4.9	3.3	0.7	1.0	14.0
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	22.0	5.1	3.2	1.0	1.0	13.7
Black, non-Hispanic	24.5	8.1	3.0	0.4	1.1	13.8
Hispanic	23.6	4.0	2.2	0.5	3.8	13.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	21.4	3.5	0.4	0.7	5.7	16.6
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	24.5	5.6	3.2	1.3	1.1	14.9
$30,000–69,999	20.7	5.8	1.7	0.6	1.3	13.2
$70,000 or more	23.4	4.3	4.4	1.1	2.5	14.0
Parents' education						
High school or less	19.4	4.7	0.6	0.6	2.0	12.8
Some postsecondary	24.8	5.1	2.1	0.5	2.7	17.7
Bachelor's degree	21.7	5.2	4.7	1.2	0.4	13.3
Advanced degree	25.0	5.8	4.0	0.9	1.4	14.2
SAT-combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	23.1	6.3	2.7	1.1	1.7	12.6
900–1199	21.4	4.4	2.7	0.7	0.8	14.5
1200 or more	18.3	3.0	3.0	1.3	0.7	12.0
Missing	24.6	6.4	3.0	0.7	2.3	14.9
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	22.3	4.4	2.7	0.0	3.2	14.7
19–24	26.3	7.0	4.4	0.9	1.4	13.8
25 or more	24.4	4.3	3.1	0.8	1.3	16.2
Missing	21.0	5.1	2.4	0.9	1.5	13.5
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	22.8	5.4	3.1	0.9	1.5	14.0
Part-time	18.2	3.9	0.6	1.0	1.6	13.5
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	25.8	6.0	3.6	1.2	2.6	16.4
Loan aid	22.0	5.0	2.4	0.9	1.2	13.9
No aid	19.3	5.1	3.4	0.5	1.0	11.1

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*Includes public; private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit institutions.

NOTE: Students could name more than one reason. Thus, columns do not sum to the total. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

institutions and 5 percent of students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions mentioned specifically that the fact that friends or spouses attended the institution was a factor, but for the most part, students in both types of institutions gave reasons in the "other" influence-related category. That is, they were influenced by individuals or things other than parents, friends, teachers, or counselors. Other individuals with influence might include, for example, siblings; coaches; employers; or alumni, faculty, or admissions staff connected with institutions. Other things students might have been influenced by include informational materials or recruiting activities sponsored by institutions. Students who attended private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were slightly more likely than those in public 4-year institutions to report this "other" influence reason (14 percent versus 10 percent).

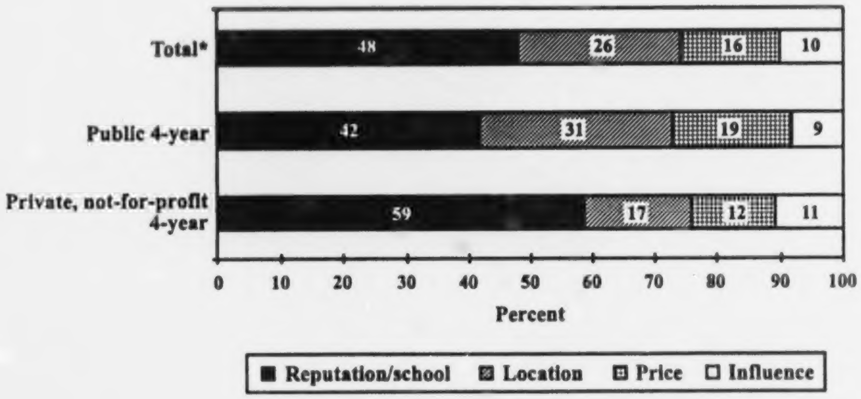
Most Important Reason

In addition to being asked to enumerate the reasons they chose the institution they attended, 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students were also asked to identify the most important reason for their choice. Students at both public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely to cite reputation/school-related reasons for choosing their institution than they were to cite location, price, or influence (figure 5 and table 8). However, students at public 4-year institutions were more likely than those at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to identify location or price as most important.

The most important reason for selecting an institution varied by student characteristics (such as family income and parents' education) as well as by sector (public or private, not-for-profit), and many of these characteristics are interrelated. Therefore, multivariate analyses were conducted to take into account this covariation. Tables 9–11 show the percentages of students at 4-year institutions who cited reputation/school-, location-, or price-related reasons as the most important considerations in choosing their institutions and the adjusted percentages after taking into account the covariation of the variables listed in the table. The results are summarized in table 12.

Multivariate analysis confirmed that, after controlling for student characteristics, beginning postsecondary students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely than those at public 4-year institutions to give a reputation/school-related reason as the most important consideration in choosing where to enroll (table 9). Certain student background characteristics were associated with considering reputation to be most important as well. These included having a family income of $70,000 or more (if dependent) compared to an income of less than $30,000, and having parents with some postsecondary education (although not a degree) compared to a

Figure 5—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions according to the most important reason for choosing their institution, by type of institution: 1995–96



*Includes students at public; private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit 4-year institutions.

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

high school education or less. Finally, students who enrolled full time were more likely than those who enrolled part time to identify a reputation/school-related reason as the most important.

Again controlling for student characteristics, beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year institutions were still more likely than those at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to give a location reason as most important in choosing their institution (table 10). Students whose parents had a high school education or less were more likely than those whose parents had more education to consider location most important. So were students from families with incomes less than $30,000 compared with those from families with incomes of $30,000–69,999. Students with a combined score of less than 900 on their SAT tests were more likely than those with a score of 1200 or higher to consider location most important, as were part-time students compared to full-time students, and unaided students compared to students with loans.

Table 8—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions according to the most important reason for choosing their institution: 1995–96

	Reputation/school	Location	Price	Influence
Total*	48.1	26.2	16.2	9.5
		Public 4-year		
Total	41.5	31.2	18.7	8.6
Student characteristics				
Gender				
Male	42.4	30.1	18.2	9.3
Female	40.8	32.2	19.1	7.9
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	41.8	31.7	19.2	7.3
Black, non-Hispanic	38.5	31.7	16.6	13.3
Hispanic	40.3	30.5	20.7	8.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	44.5	26.2	14.7	14.7
American Indian/Alaskan Native	16.9	50.0	19.2	13.9
Family income of dependent students				
Less than $30,000	39.7	32.9	18.6	8.7
$30,000–69,999	40.5	30.5	20.6	8.3
$70,000 or more	48.1	27.7	16.2	8.0
Parents' education				
High school or less	38.0	35.1	17.5	9.4
Some postsecondary	45.3	31.2	15.5	7.9
Bachelor's degree	40.6	30.3	21.3	7.8
Advanced degree	46.1	25.5	19.6	8.8
SAT-combined verbal and math				
Less than 900	43.0	35.5	13.0	8.5
900–1199	44.6	28.7	19.9	6.8
1200 or more	49.8	19.0	28.6	2.6
Missing	38.1	33.4	17.9	10.5
ACT composite score				
Less than 19	32.4	37.8	16.9	12.9
19–24	38.6	37.1	17.5	6.8
25 or more	42.9	23.6	25.6	8.0
Missing	44.4	29.2	17.9	8.5
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics				
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	43.0	29.7	18.7	8.6
Part-time	31.5	42.2	18.2	8.1
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	43.1	26.2	25.0	5.8
Loan aid	41.0	31.3	18.4	9.3
No aid	41.0	35.6	13.4	10.0

Table 8—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions according to the most important reason for choosing their institution: 1995–96—Continued

	Reputation/school	Location	Price	Influence
		Private, not-for-profit 4-year		
Total	59.4	17.4	12.2	11.0
Student characteristics				
Gender				
Male	58.6	17.6	12.3	11.5
Female	60.1	17.2	12.0	10.7
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	61.4	17.1	10.7	10.8
Black, non-Hispanic	49.8	20.4	17.4	12.4
Hispanic	55.5	15.8	16.0	12.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	58.4	16.8	15.8	9.1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—
Family income of dependent students				
Less than $30,000	53.0	18.3	15.5	13.3
$30,000–69,999	63.7	12.7	14.2	9.4
$70,000 or more	59.9	20.1	8.9	11.1
Parents' education				
High school or less	55.4	21.7	12.3	10.6
Some postsecondary	60.5	16.6	10.9	12.0
Bachelor's degree	61.0	15.0	13.6	10.4
Advanced degree	61.1	16.2	11.2	11.5
SAT-combined verbal and math				
Less than 900	58.6	17.7	13.3	10.5
900–1199	59.6	17.2	13.3	10.0
1200 or more	63.5	15.4	12.5	8.6
Missing	58.0	18.3	10.7	13.0
ACT composite score				
Less than 19	51.7	25.9	9.5	12.9
19–24	56.3	19.1	12.4	12.2
25 or more	58.0	13.3	17.6	11.1
Missing	61.2	17.0	11.2	10.5
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics				
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	59.8	16.6	12.7	11.0
Part-time	55.5	26.7	6.5	11.3
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	53.5	14.7	17.9	14.0
Loan aid	60.8	15.8	13.4	10.1
No aid	62.6	25.7	1.5	10.2

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*Includes public; private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit institutions.

NOTE: Due to rounding, details may not sum to 100.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Table 9—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who reported a reputation/school-related reason as the most important reason for choosing their institution, and the adjusted percentage after taking into account the covariation of the variables listed in the table[1]: 1995–96

	Unadjusted percentage[2]	Adjusted percentage[3]	WLS coefficient[4]	Standard error[5]
Total	48.1	48.1	32.6	4.2
Gender				
Male	48.3	48.2	†	†
Female	48.0	48.1	-0.1	1.6
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	49.1	49.0	†	†
Black, non-Hispanic	42.9	44.0	-5.0	2.8
Hispanic	45.5	47.1	-1.8	3.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	49.1	47.8	-1.1	3.3
American Indian/Alaskan Native	23.3*	45.8	-3.2	6.7
Income and dependency status				
Dependent: less than $30,000	44.1	46.0	†	†
Dependent: $30,000–69,999	48.7	48.7	2.7	2.2
Dependent: $70,000 or more	53.1*	51.4*	5.4	2.6
Independent	41.0	41.9	-4.0	3.4
Parents' education				
High school or less	43.7	46.1	†	†
Some postsecondary	50.3	51.8*	5.7	2.5
Bachelor's degree	47.9	47.2	1.0	2.3
Advanced degree	53.0*	49.3	3.1	2.5
SAT-combined verbal and math				
Less than 900	49.2	48.0	†	†
900–1199	50.4	47.0	-1.0	2.7
1200 or more	56.8	50.3	2.3	3.4
Missing	44.4	48.2	0.2	2.7
ACT-composite score				
Less than 19	36.7	39.9	†	†
19–24	44.0	44.4	4.5	3.4
25 or more	48.5*	46.3	6.5	3.8
Missing	51.3*	50.9*	11.0	3.2
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	49.3	48.8	†	†
Part-time	39.2*	42.9*	-5.9	2.8
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	46.3	47.0	-2.5	2.0
Loan aid	50.0	49.5	†	†
No aid	46.5	46.9	-2.6	2.2
Institution control				
Public	41.5	42.2	†	†
Private, not-for-profit	59.4*	58.0*	15.8	1.8
Private, for-profit	60.9*	63.5*	21.3	7.3

*$p \leq .05$.

†Not applicable for the reference group.

[1] The italicized group in each category is the reference group being compared.

[2] The estimates are from the NPSAS:96 Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

[3] The percentages are adjusted for differences associated with other variables in the table (see appendix B).

[4] Weighted least squares (WLS) coefficient, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

[5] Standard error of WLS coefficient, adjusted for design effect, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Table 10—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who reported a location-related reason as the most important reason for choosing their institution, and the adjusted percentage after taking into account the covariation of the variables listed in the table[1]: 1995–96

	Unadjusted percentage[2]	Adjusted percentage[3]	WLS coefficient[4]	Standard error[5]
Total	26.2	26.2	42.5	3.6
Gender				
Male	25.8	25.6	†	†
Female	26.5	26.6	1.0	1.4
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	26.3	26.7	†	†
Black, non-Hispanic	27.6	25.8	-0.9	2.4
Hispanic	25.7	24.4	-2.2	2.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	22.6	23.3	-3.4	2.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	46.6	28.3	1.6	5.7
Income and dependency status				
Dependent: less than $30,000	28.2	27.9	†	†
Dependent: $30,000–69,999	24.2	24.2*	-3.7	1.9
Dependent: $70,000 or more	24.5	25.3	-2.5	2.2
Independent	34.5	32.6	4.7	2.9
Parents' education				
High school or less	30.7	29.4	†	†
Some postsecondary	26.4	25.1*	-4.3	2.1
Bachelor's degree	24.8*	25.2*	-4.2	2.0
Advanced degree	21.3*	23.4*	-5.9	2.1
SAT-combined verbal and math				
Less than 900	28.4	29.5	†	†
900–1199	24.3	26.9	-2.6	2.3
1200 or more	17.2*	23.2*	-6.3	2.9
Missing	28.7	25.5	-4.0	2.3
ACT-composite score				
Less than 19	35.2	32.5	†	†
19–24	31.6	31.2	-1.4	2.9
25 or more	19.8*	23.1*	-9.4	3.2
Missing	24.2*	24.2*	-8.3	2.8
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	24.8	25.4	†	†
Part-time	37.0*	32.3*	6.9	2.4
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	22.8	23.0	-1.5	1.8
Loan aid	24.3	24.5	†	†
No aid	33.0*	32.1*	7.7	1.8
Institution control				
Public	31.2	30.4	†	†
Private, not-for-profit	17.4*	19.1*	-11.3	1.5
Private, for-profit	17.9	16.5*	-13.9	6.3

*$p \leq .05$.

†Not applicable for the reference group.

[1] The italicized group in each category is the reference group being compared.

[2] The estimates are from the NPSAS:96 Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

[3] The percentages are adjusted for differences associated with other variables in the table (see appendix B).

[4] Weighted least squares (WLS) coefficient, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

[5] Standard error of WLS coefficient, adjusted for design effect, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Table 11—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who reported a price-related reason as the most important reason for choosing their institution, and the adjusted percentage after taking into account the covariation of the variables listed in the table[1]: 1995–96

	Unadjusted percentage[2]	Adjusted percentage[3]	WLS coefficient[4]	Standard error[5]
Total	16.2	16.2	15.6	3.1
Gender				
Male	16.0	16.2	†	†
Female	16.4	16.2	0.0	1.2
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	16.0	15.7	†	†
Black, non-Hispanic	16.7	18.1	2.4	2.1
Hispanic	18.8	19.0	3.2	2.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	15.1	14.9	-0.8	2.4
American Indian/Alaskan Native	16.0	15.2	-0.5	5.0
Income and dependency status				
Dependent: less than $30,000	17.6	16.8	†	†
Dependent: $30,000–69,999	18.3	18.1	1.3	1.6
Dependent: $70,000 or more	13.1	13.4	-3.4	2.0
Independent	12.9	15.0	-1.7	2.6
Parents' education				
High school or less	15.7	15.3	†	†
Some postsecondary	14.0	14.1	-1.3	1.9
Bachelor's degree	18.6	18.6	3.3	1.7
Advanced degree	15.7	16.5	1.1	1.9
SAT-combined verbal and math				
Less than 900	13.1	13.8	†	†
900–1199	17.3	18.5*	4.7	2.0
1200 or more	20.4*	22.2*	8.4	2.6
Missing	15.6	14.3	0.6	2.0
ACT-composite score				
Less than 19	15.3	15.9	†	†
19–24	15.9	17.0	1.1	2.5
25 or more	22.6	21.3	5.4	2.8
Missing	15.1	15.0	-0.8	2.4
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	16.4	16.1	†	†
Part-time	14.9	17.4	1.3	2.1
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	22.5*	21.7*	5.2	1.5
Loan aid	16.0	16.5	†	†
No aid	10.4*	10.5*	-6.0	1.6
Institution control				
Public	18.7	19.0	†	†
Private, not-for-profit	12.2*	11.6*	-7.5	1.3
Private, for-profit	6.8*	8.5	-10.5	5.5

*p ≤ .05.

†Not applicable for the reference group.

[1] The italicized group in each category is the reference group being compared.

[2] The estimates are from the NPSAS:96 Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

[3] The percentages are adjusted for differences associated with other variables in the table (see appendix B).

[4] Weighted least squares (WLS) coefficient, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

[5] Standard error of WLS coefficient, adjusted for design effect, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Table 12—Characteristics associated with a greater likelihood of reporting certain types of reasons as most important in beginning postsecondary students' choice of a 4-year institution: 1995–96

	REPUTATION	LOCATION	PRICE
Student characteristics			
Family income/ dependency status	Dependent, income more than $70,000 (versus less than $30,000)	Dependent, income $30,000–60,000 (versus less than $30,000)	—
Parents' education	Some postsecondary education (versus high school or less)	High school or less (versus at least some postsecondary)	—
SAT-combined verbal and math	—	Less than 900 (versus 1200 or more)	900 or more (versus less than 900)
ACT composite score	—	Score less than 19 (versus 25 or more)	—
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics			
Attendance intensity	Full-time (versus part-time)	Part-time (versus full-time)	—
Aid status	—	No aid (versus loan aid)	Aided, no loans (versus loans) Loans (versus no aid)
Institution type			
Control	Private, not-for-profit and private, for-profit (versus public)	Public (versus private, not-for-profit or private, for-profit)	Public (versus private, not-for-profit)

NOTE: These are summaries of the multivariate models presented in tables 9–11. Gender and race–ethnicity were taken into account in the analysis but were not associated with any greater likelihood of reporting these types of reasons as most important in the choice of a 4-year institution.

SOURCE: Tables 9–11.

The multivariate analysis also confirmed that after controlling for student characteristics, beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year institutions were still more likely than those at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to consider price the most important reason for choosing their institutions (table 11). Price as the most important reason was also associated with a combined SAT score of 900 or more compared with a lower score. Compared with students with loan aid, aided students without loans were more likely to consider price as the most important reason for choosing their institutions, while unaided students were less likely to do so.

Satisfaction With Choice

The 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions were generally very satisfied with most aspects of the colleges and universities they chose. At least 8 out of 10 students at both public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were satisfied with the prestige of their institution, the campus climate regarding students of different racial or ethnic backgrounds, class size, instructors' ability to teach, their intellectual growth, and their social life (table 13). Students at public 4-year institutions were less likely to be satisfied with course availability (73 percent) than with other aspects of their institutions, and students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were less likely to be satisfied with the price of attending (51 percent).

Beginning postsecondary students were also satisfied with the activities they participated in and the services they used. In both types of 4-year institutions, 9 out of 10 students who had participated in cultural activities, used counseling services, or used sports and recreational facilities were satisfied. In addition, 8 out of 10 of those who had used job placement services were satisfied (table 14).

In interpreting these data it is important to keep in mind that students were reporting their satisfaction during their first year enrolled, and their opinions could easily change over time. Nevertheless, satisfaction did vary somewhat across types of institutions and according to the most important reasons students gave for choosing their institution.

Differences by Type of Institution

While beginning postsecondary students at both at public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were generally satisfied with most aspects of their institutions, there were a few differences between these students. Students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely than those at public 4-year institutions to be satisfied with aspects of the institution related to instruction, such as course availability (81 percent versus 73 percent), class size (97 percent versus 88 percent), and the instructors' ability to teach (93 percent versus 87 percent) (table 13).

Table 13—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who were satisfied with various aspects of their first-year experience: 1995–96

	Prestige of institution	Campus climate	Price of attending	Course availability	Class size	Instructors' ability to teach	Intellectual growth	Social life
Total*	87.8	87.3	68.2	76.2	90.8	89.3	93.1	90.6
				Public 4-year				
Total	86.9	89.5	78.0	73.1	87.7	87.0	92.9	91.7
Student characteristics								
Gender								
Male	85.7	89.4	79.2	72.9	86.8	85.8	92.9	92.2
Female	88.1	89.5	77.0	73.4	88.5	88.1	92.8	91.3
Race–ethnicity								
White, non-Hispanic	87.1	90.7	80.2	73.3	89.7	89.8	93.5	92.3
Black, non-Hispanic	84.7	81.8	68.7	75.7	89.8	82.0	89.1	88.6
Hispanic	86.8	88.1	76.7	76.2	83.4	82.2	95.5	92.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	87.3	89.2	71.9	63.0	69.2	70.8	89.7	90.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	95.1	92.5	74.8	82.8	85.1	94.2	93.3	97.0
Family income of dependent students								
Less than $30,000	87.8	90.2	78.1	75.0	85.5	83.9	91.2	92.3
$30,000–69,999	86.2	90.5	77.5	72.6	88.1	86.2	93.1	93.2
$70,000 or more	87.2	87.0	80.5	69.8	87.6	89.8	93.6	92.8
Parents' education								
High school or less	86.9	91.2	78.9	76.1	88.5	87.0	93.4	90.1
Some postsecondary	85.3	93.5	78.2	68.5	90.9	85.3	92.5	92.9
Bachelor's degree	87.2	89.2	76.8	73.5	85.8	87.9	93.6	92.5
Advanced degree	87.5	83.5	78.2	72.1	85.9	88.1	91.1	91.8
SAT-combined verbal and math								
Less than 900	89.3	88.2	75.2	74.9	89.6	84.7	94.0	90.9
900–1199	87.1	90.1	78.9	68.8	86.1	86.8	92.1	90.6
1200 or more	85.3	85.3	82.6	69.2	80.5	88.7	93.7	93.6
Missing	86.5	90.2	77.6	75.5	89.3	87.5	92.7	92.2
ACT composite score								
Less than 19	89.4	90.0	79.1	76.2	91.4	84.4	91.3	92.3
19–24	85.8	90.9	78.5	74.5	89.8	88.6	92.7	92.6
25 or more	84.0	87.6	79.9	74.3	87.3	90.9	94.4	94.7
Missing	87.6	89.1	77.2	71.7	86.2	86.0	92.9	90.5
Most important reason for attending								
Price-related	78.9	85.3	81.8	68.4	87.4	84.5	89.3	88.3
Influence-related	88.2	88.1	76.4	72.6	88.4	80.4	90.9	88.9
Location-related	88.3	92.3	77.2	75.2	90.4	88.0	93.6	92.4
Reputation/school-related	89.9	90.0	77.7	74.3	86.5	89.4	94.9	93.5
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics								
Attendance intensity								
Full-time	87.0	89.3	77.8	72.8	87.5	86.9	93.4	92.2
Part-time	86.5	90.6	79.2	74.9	88.7	87.8	89.4	88.4
Aid status								
Aided, no loans	89.1	90.9	83.7	74.5	87.2	87.0	94.0	93.3
Loan aid	85.8	89.3	74.0	73.8	88.1	86.2	92.1	91.4
No aid	86.7	88.3	78.7	71.0	87.5	88.3	92.9	90.6

Table 13—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who were satisfied with various aspects of their first-year experience: 1995–96—Continued

	Prestige of institution	Campus climate	Price of attending	Course availability	Class size	Instructors' ability to teach	Intellectual growth	Social life
				Private, not-for-profit 4-year				
Total	89.2	83.0	51.4	81.3	96.6	93.3	93.6	88.7
Student characteristics								
Gender								
Male	88.9	81.6	51.2	80.8	96.2	92.3	94.3	89.4
Female	89.4	84.2	51.5	81.6	96.9	94.1	93.2	88.2
Race–ethnicity								
White, non-Hispanic	92.9	84.5	53.8	83.9	97.4	95.0	95.6	90.2
Black, non-Hispanic	68.1	73.2	41.9	70.6	94.4	88.3	86.2	82.6
Hispanic	88.6	85.6	51.3	80.3	96.2	92.5	96.0	90.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	86.5	83.8	42.9	72.3	91.6	85.9	87.0	84.3
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Family income of dependent students								
Less than $30,000	86.1	85.0	53.0	79.2	95.5	92.3	92.3	85.5
$30,000–69,999	91.3	83.9	51.3	81.9	96.5	93.0	93.8	90.0
$70,000 or more	90.9	80.2	50.7	81.8	97.4	94.5	94.2	91.5
Parents' education								
High school or less	84.8	84.3	48.2	81.5	97.0	90.6	91.7	88.4
Some postsecondary	88.6	88.4	49.2	78.5	97.0	91.2	95.2	87.6
Bachelor's degree	90.1	82.8	53.0	81.9	96.2	94.0	93.9	88.9
Advanced degree	92.9	79.4	53.8	82.8	96.5	96.1	94.8	88.9
SAT-combined verbal and math								
Less than 900	86.4	85.7	48.9	79.0	96.8	90.1	92.5	88.3
900–1199	90.9	81.0	47.7	78.8	96.2	95.6	93.5	89.4
1200 or more	94.9	79.3	54.5	89.3	96.4	95.3	94.5	87.7
Missing	86.6	85.1	53.7	80.6	96.9	92.3	93.9	88.9
ACT composite score								
Less than 19	86.0	85.5	47.9	79.5	97.7	90.4	94.5	89.9
19–24	92.4	86.0	50.1	82.2	98.8	96.1	94.2	93.8
25 or more	94.1	81.3	62.5	85.5	97.4	97.8	96.3	93.1
Missing	87.6	82.4	49.7	80.3	95.7	91.9	92.9	86.4
Most important reason for attending								
Price-related	84.6	80.1	63.4	73.2	96.2	91.9	92.4	88.7
Influence-related	85.7	88.0	51.0	78.0	95.8	90.8	93.9	88.2
Location-related	81.3	77.9	49.4	76.9	96.0	92.2	89.8	88.6
Reputation/school-related	92.9	84.4	50.0	85.3	97.0	95.1	94.9	88.8
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics								
Attendance intensity								
Full-time	89.5	82.9	50.6	81.4	96.7	93.3	94.2	89.5
Part-time	86.0	84.7	60.2	80.2	95.2	94.2	87.5	79.8
Aid status								
Aided, no loans	89.2	83.6	63.4	81.9	96.4	95.2	95.5	91.7
Loan aid	89.7	84.3	46.6	81.1	96.8	92.7	93.4	88.1
No aid	87.5	78.7	50.6	80.8	96.2	92.8	92.2	86.8

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*Includes public; private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit institutions.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Table 14—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who used certain services who were satisfied with them: 1995–96

	Cultural activities	Counseling services	Job placement services	Sports and recreational activities
Total*	96.6	91.8	82.8	93.5
		Public 4-year		
Total	97.3	91.6	81.5	95.5
Student characteristics				
Gender				
Male	96.9	92.9	77.1	95.8
Female	97.7	90.4	85.1	95.2
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	97.9	91.6	84.7	96.2
Black, non-Hispanic	94.7	93.3	66.8	92.3
Hispanic	98.1	93.1	86.3	94.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	95.6	86.0	76.7	95.1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—
Family income of dependent students				
Less than $30,000	96.1	92.3	78.6	94.8
$30,000–69,999	97.9	89.7	84.2	95.5
$70,000 or more	97.6	94.0	77.1	96.7
Parents' education				
High school or less	96.6	93.7	83.5	94.8
Some postsecondary	97.8	88.5	78.3	94.5
Bachelor's degree	97.7	92.2	83.8	96.9
Advanced degree	97.5	90.6	80.7	95.7
SAT-combined verbal and math				
Less than 900	96.0	94.1	81.0	91.1
900–1199	98.4	94.1	84.1	96.0
1200 or more	97.4	86.5	69.4	95.2
Missing	97.0	90.5	83.0	96.7
ACT composite score				
Less than 19	97.2	90.7	75.1	96.8
19–24	96.9	90.6	87.8	96.7
25 or more	98.7	93.8	91.6	95.9
Missing	97.1	91.7	77.2	94.6
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics				
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	97.3	91.5	80.8	95.5
Part-time	98.1	92.2	88.7	96.2
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	97.5	93.9	85.9	93.9
Loan aid	97.4	90.5	80.5	95.5
No aid	97.2	91.2	78.6	97.0

Table 14—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in 4-year institutions who used certain services who were satisfied with them: 1995–96—Continued

	Cultural activities	Counseling services	Job placement services	Sports and recreational activities
		Private, not-for-profit 4-year		
Total	95.8	92.2	84.8	90.1
Student characteristics				
Gender				
Male	95.2	95.8	84.1	89.3
Female	96.3	89.2	85.2	90.9
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	96.9	94.3	85.5	92.0
Black, non-Hispanic	88.1	85.6	85.7	74.6
Hispanic	96.6	90.2	91.8	88.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	96.5	90.2	76.2	89.9
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—
Family income of dependent students				
Less than $30,000	95.8	92.3	87.1	87.0
$30,000–69,999	95.4	91.5	83.2	90.2
$70,000 or more	96.4	93.1	83.7	91.9
Parents' education				
High school or less	95.5	92.6	89.8	86.8
Some postsecondary	95.9	92.2	80.7	91.3
Bachelor's degree	96.0	91.9	80.0	90.6
Advanced degree	95.9	91.9	85.6	90.8
SAT-combined verbal and math				
Less than 900	97.2	91.5	83.7	88.4
900–1199	96.2	91.0	84.0	92.2
1200 or more	96.6	90.9	86.2	90.4
Missing	94.5	93.8	85.1	89.0
ACT composite score				
Less than 19	90.7	87.1	—	84.8
19–24	97.7	95.9	73.9	92.4
25 or more	97.0	93.8	81.9	91.4
Missing	95.4	91.3	86.5	89.6
Enrollment and financial aid characteristics				
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	95.8	92.5	85.5	90.2
Part-time	96.4	89.1	—	89.2
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	97.2	93.6	83.5	92.5
Loan aid	95.3	91.4	83.9	89.0
No aid	95.7	93.0	90.1	90.9

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*Includes public: private, not-for-profit; and private, for-profit institutions.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

On the other hand, beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year institutions were more likely than their counterparts at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to be satisfied with the campus climate regarding students of different racial or ethnic backgrounds (90 percent versus 83 percent). The most notable difference was in students' satisfaction with the price of attending. While 78 percent of students at public 4-year institutions were satisfied, 51 percent were satisfied at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions.

Differences by Most Important Reason for Choosing the Institution

Among beginning postsecondary students at public 4-year institutions, those who cited price as the most important reason for choosing their institution were slightly less likely than those who gave other reasons to be satisfied with the prestige of their institutions (table 13). They were also slightly less likely than those who gave location-related reasons to be satisfied with the campus climate regarding students of different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Among students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, those who gave a reputation/school-related reason as most important were more likely than those who gave a location-related reason to be satisfied with course availability (85 percent versus 77 percent). In addition, those for whom price was most important were more likely to be satisfied with the price of attending than were those for whom reputation was most important (63 percent versus 50 percent).

Summary

Beginning postsecondary students at both public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions attached more importance to reputation than to location, price, or the influence of others in choosing their institutions. However, students at public 4-year institutions were more likely than those at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to identify location or price as the most important reason for their choice.

Students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely than those at public 4-year institutions to mention each of the reputation-related reasons as important in selecting an institution. They were less likely than their public sector counterparts to mention a location reason, but if they did, they were more likely to mention liking the campus; however, students at public 4-year institutions were more likely to mention being close to home.

When students at public 4-year institutions mentioned a price-related reason, they most frequently stated the reason in general terms, such as "the price of attending was less." In contrast, when students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions mentioned a price-related reason for choosing their institution it was more likely to be getting more financial aid than any other reason.

In general, beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions were satisfied with most aspects of their institutions. Students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely than those at public 4-year institutions to be satisfied with certain aspects of instruction, but they were less likely to be satisfied with price.

4. Choosing a Public 2-Year Institution

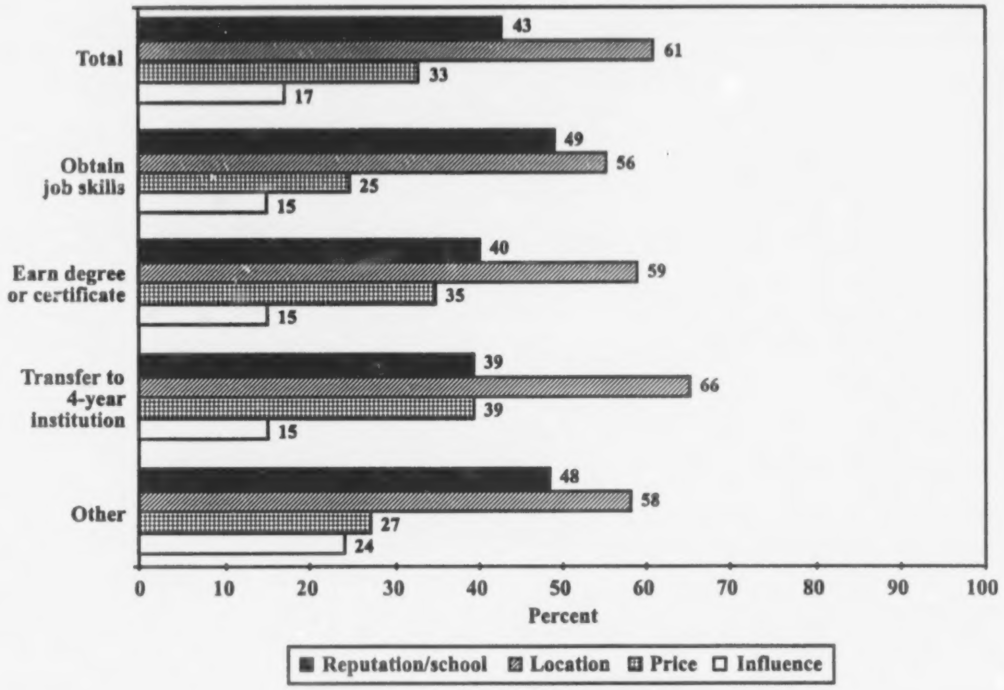
In 1995–96, about three-quarters of beginning postsecondary students who enrolled in public 2-year institutions (primarily community colleges and technical institutes) were nontraditional. In this respect, they were very different from beginning students at public 4-year institutions (where 30 percent were nontraditional), or at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions (where 25 percent were nontraditional) (table 3).

Reflecting the fact that nontraditional students often have work, family, and financial obligations competing with the demands of their academic life, beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions tended to have different considerations in choosing an institution than their counterparts at 4-year institutions. Students at public 2-year institutions were more likely to mention a price-related reason for choosing their institution (33 percent versus 26 percent), and were considerably less likely to mention a reputation/school-related reason (43 percent versus 63 percent) (figures 6 and 4). They were about equally likely to mention location (61 percent and 58 percent), and slightly less likely to mention influence factors (17 percent versus 21 percent).

Factors Affecting Choice

Location was especially important to beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions, with 61 percent mentioning at least one location-related reason for choosing their institution (figure 6 and table 15). Students mentioned location-related reasons more often than any other type of reason, followed by reputation/school-related reasons (43 percent) (table 16) and price-related reasons (33 percent) (table 17). Influence-related reasons were mentioned least often (17 percent) (table 18). Much of the variation in students' reasons for choosing their particular public 2-year institution was related to their reasons for enrolling (job skills, degree or certificate, transfer, or other reason) or whether the students considered themselves primarily students working to pay their educational expenses or employees taking classes. These patterns are described in this section.

Figure 6—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions who gave various types of reasons for choosing their institution, by reason for enrolling: 1995–96



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Location-Related Reasons

In contrast to 4-year institutions, which often attract students from a wide geographic area and sometimes compete for students in a national or even international market, public 2-year institutions tend to serve a local constituency. As already indicated, a majority (61 percent) of the 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions mentioned at least one location-related reason for choosing their institution. Forty-six percent gave being close to home as a reason, and 10 percent mentioned being able to live at home (students could have given both reasons) (table 15).

Table 15—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who chose their institution for location-related reasons: 1995–96

	Any location-related reason	Close to home	Could live at home	Liked the campus	Close to job	Other location reason
Total	60.8	45.8	9.7	4.0	3.5	3.2
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	57.1	42.5	9.4	2.2	3.1	3.2
Female	64.3	48.9	9.9	5.7	3.8	3.2
Age						
18 years or younger	64.9	49.4	10.3	4.7	2.6	4.2
19–23 years	60.6	45.7	9.9	4.3	3.0	2.6
24 years or older	54.6	40.1	8.4	2.6	5.5	2.6
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	62.6	47.2	10.1	4.0	3.4	2.7
Black, non-Hispanic	54.2	41.8	4.7	2.8	6.1	3.6
Hispanic	62.6	44.6	15.3	6.2	2.8	5.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	47.3	42.6	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—
Single parent status						
Not a single parent	61.2	46.5	9.9	3.9	3.1	3.2
Single parent	57.3	40.4	7.7	5.2	6.6	3.1
Traditional/nontraditional status						
Traditional	62.6	49.3	8.5	3.5	0.8	4.2
Minimally nontraditional	60.9	45.4	11.2	5.9	1.0	3.3
Moderately nontraditional	60.2	46.4	10.7	3.1	3.5	2.7
Highly nontraditional	59.4	41.7	8.3	3.8	8.7	2.6
Dependency status						
Dependent	61.9	47.2	10.3	4.2	2.0	3.6
Independent, no dependents	59.8	47.2	7.5	1.6	5.8	1.1
Independent, with dependents	58.0	40.8	9.0	4.8	6.6	3.1
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	64.7	47.6	13.5	6.8	1.4	3.5
$30,000–69,999	60.7	47.0	9.0	2.6	1.8	3.5
$70,000 or more	60.2	46.9	8.2	3.9	3.4	4.2
Parents' education						
High school or less	58.9	43.6	9.1	4.9	4.4	3.3
Some postsecondary	61.9	48.1	9.9	2.8	2.5	3.3
Bachelor's degree	66.3	50.1	10.5	4.0	4.1	2.9
Advanced degree	59.0	45.3	7.9	3.5	1.2	5.0

Table 15—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who chose their institution for location-related reasons: 1995–96—Continued

	Any location-related reason	Close to home	Could live at home	Liked the campus	Close to job	Other location reason
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	62.9	48.3	9.1	4.4	1.6	3.5
Part-time	59.1	43.6	10.2	3.7	5.1	2.9
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	59.1	45.3	8.5	4.6	3.4	3.4
Loan aid	70.3	48.7	10.9	5.2	2.6	5.1
No aid	60.4	45.7	10.2	3.5	3.6	2.8
Primary role if working while enrolled						
Student working to meet expenses	66.5	52.0	10.4	4.1	2.3	3.1
Employee who has decided to enroll	56.6	40.9	8.8	4.5	7.3	2.6
Reason for enrolling						
Obtain job skills	55.6	44.0	8.7	2.7	4.3	1.4
Earn degree or certificate	58.5	42.7	10.1	5.9	4.1	2.3
Transfer to 4-year institution	66.3	51.8	9.7	2.4	2.4	4.0
Other	57.6	38.9	10.2	6.9	4.1	4.1

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

NOTE: Students could name more than one reason. Thus, columns do not sum to the total. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

While students at public 2-year and 4-year institutions were about equally likely to have location-related reasons for choosing their institution, their particular location concerns were different (tables 15 and 5). For example, students at public 2-year institutions were much more likely to mention being close to home as a reason for choosing their institution (46 percent versus 32 percent) or living at home (10 percent versus 5 percent), while students at 4-year institutions were much more likely to report that they liked the campus (16 percent versus 4 percent) or had "other" location-related reasons (12 percent versus 3 percent).

Within the beginning postsecondary student population at public 2-year institutions, the specific location reasons students cited varied according to whether they considered themselves primarily students or employees. Comparing the two groups, those who considered themselves primarily students were more likely to mention being close to home (52 percent versus 41 percent), and those who considered themselves primarily employees were more likely to mention being close to their job (7 percent versus 2 percent) (table 15).

Reputation/School-Related Reasons

Overall, 43 percent of the beginning postsecondary students attending public 2-year institutions mentioned a reputation/school-related reason for choosing their institution (table 16). Their specific considerations are difficult to know, because an "other" reputation/school-related reason was cited more often (by 25 percent) than any of the other types of reputation reasons. As indicated earlier, this "other" category might include reasons such as the institution's program offerings in a particular area or its instructional methods. Beginning students at public 2-year institutions were much less likely than their counterparts at 4-year institutions to choose their institution on the basis of its reputation as a good school (14 percent versus 35 percent of students at 4-year institutions) (tables 16 and 4).

Although the percentage of beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions mentioning the institution's reputation for job placement as a reason for choosing their institution was relatively small overall (4 percent), it was notably more important to some kinds of students than others (table 16). Concern with the institution's reputation for job placement was greatest among students whose reason for enrolling was to obtain job skills. Twelve percent of such students mentioned the institution's reputation for job placement as a reason for choosing their institution, compared with no more than 3 percent of those enrolling for any other reason.

Students enrolled at public 2-year institutions who had certain characteristics (often associated with enrolling for job skills, table 2) were also particularly likely to mention the institution's reputation for job placement: being more than 24 years old, independent, a single parent, enrolled part time, and primarily an employee (table 16).

Price-Related Reasons

One-third of the beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions mentioned a price-related reason for choosing their institution (table 17). Nineteen percent expressed their reason in general terms (some form of "the price of attending was less"), and 8 percent specifically mentioned tuition. Students planning to transfer (37 percent of beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions, table 2) were particularly likely to mention a price-related reason (39 percent). They were more likely to do so than students who enrolled to obtain job skills (25 percent) or for "other" reasons (27 percent). Included in this group would be any

Table 16—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who chose their institution for reputation/school-related reasons: 1995–96

	Any reputation/ school-related reason	School has good reputation	Job placement	Facilities/ equipment	Faculty reputation	Other reputation/ school-related reason
Total	42.8	14.2	3.9	2.1	2.0	24.8
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	46.0	15.8	4.5	2.1	2.1	26.2
Female	39.8	12.8	3.4	2.0	2.0	23.5
Age						
18 years or younger	37.5	12.0	1.2	2.5	1.1	23.5
19–23 years	43.5	14.9	2.8	1.5	2.7	25.3
24 years or older	50.3	16.7	10.1	2.3	2.6	26.2
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	39.9	12.4	3.2	2.1	1.9	23.6
Black, non-Hispanic	52.9	17.6	5.0	3.6	1.3	30.8
Hispanic	47.0	21.8	7.6	1.1	4.1	22.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	51.9	15.3	1.9	0.0	2.2	34.4
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—
Single parent status						
Not a single parent	41.5	14.1	2.7	2.1	2.0	24.5
Single parent	53.2	15.0	14.5	2.2	2.5	27.1
Traditional/nontraditional status						
Traditional	38.7	12.4	1.7	2.9	1.1	22.6
Minimally nontraditional	43.8	15.7	1.2	0.6	2.2	27.0
Moderately nontraditional	40.2	14.6	3.3	2.3	2.7	22.4
Highly nontraditional	49.4	14.3	9.8	2.3	2.2	28.0
Dependency status						
Dependent	41.0	14.1	1.7	2.2	1.8	24.4
Independent, no dependents	41.6	14.7	7.6	1.6	2.3	20.5
Independent, with dependents	49.2	14.2	8.7	2.0	2.7	28.7
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	41.1	18.2	1.9	0.7	1.2	22.3
$30,000–69,999	41.1	11.9	1.8	3.2	2.0	25.9
$70,000 or more	40.4	12.7	1.1	2.4	2.3	24.3
Parents' education						
High school or less	43.9	15.8	5.9	2.2	2.0	23.6
Some postsecondary	41.7	14.8	3.8	2.3	1.1	22.6
Bachelor's degree	36.6	9.1	1.6	1.6	1.5	24.6
Advanced degree	46.1	14.6	0.0	1.6	5.1	30.1

Table 16—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who chose their institution for reputation/school-related reasons: 1995–96—Continued

	Any reputation/ school-related reason	School has good reputation	Job placement	Facilities/ equipment	Faculty reputation	Other reputation/ school-related reason
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	39.0	13.2	2.1	2.1	1.6	22.6
Part-time	46.1	15.0	5.6	2.1	2.3	26.8
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	45.7	14.0	5.8	1.5	2.8	26.3
Loan aid	39.9	13.5	3.4	2.3	1.3	25.8
No aid	41.5	14.4	2.9	2.4	1.7	23.7
Primary role if working while enrolled						
Student working to meet expenses	37.3	12.7	2.4	1.8	2.2	21.8
Employee who has decided to enroll	49.7	18.3	7.3	3.0	1.7	26.0
Reason for enrolling						
Obtain job skills	49.2	13.9	11.7	1.7	1.7	25.5
Earn degree or certificate	39.8	12.1	2.8	1.7	2.6	26.2
Transfer to 4-year institution	39.3	15.4	1.0	2.2	1.8	22.1
Other	47.8	16.0	2.0	2.9	2.4	28.5

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

NOTE: Students could name more than one reason. Thus, columns do not sum to the total. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

beginning students with bachelor's degree aspirations who were starting at a public 2-year institution to reduce the total price of attaining that degree.

Also particularly likely to cite a price-related reason for choosing their institution were students with characteristics associated with traditional student status: being less than 24 years of age, being financially dependent, enrolling full time, and working but considering themselves primarily students as opposed to employees. Traditional status was also associated with a transfer goal: almost half (48 percent) of traditional students and 38 percent of minimally nontraditional students at less-than-4-year institutions were intending to transfer to a 4-year institution (table 2).

Table 17—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who chose their institution for price-related reasons: 1995–96

	Any price-related reason	Price of attendance was less	Tuition was low	Got more financial aid	Shorter time to finish	Other price reason
Total	32.9	18.8	7.8	2.5	0.8	4.3
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	32.5	16.9	9.4	2.7	0.2	4.9
Female	33.2	20.6	6.4	2.4	1.3	3.7
Age						
18 years or younger	39.1	24.5	8.8	2.0	1.3	4.6
19–23 years	34.1	17.3	8.6	4.3	0.7	4.3
24 years or older	20.9	11.8	5.1	0.7	0.0	3.8
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	35.1	19.9	7.7	3.2	0.6	5.1
Black, non-Hispanic	22.4	11.3	8.9	2.1	0.6	2.5
Hispanic	28.7	17.8	6.7	0.0	2.5	1.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	33.1	22.7	9.5	0.0	0.0	0.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—
Single parent status						
Not a single parent	34.5	19.4	8.5	2.7	0.9	4.6
Single parent	19.2	14.2	2.2	1.5	0.0	2.3
Traditional/nontraditional status						
Traditional	42.2	24.0	6.9	5.6	1.7	5.6
Minimally nontraditional	36.0	18.8	10.1	2.8	0.9	5.3
Moderately nontraditional	31.6	19.8	9.3	0.9	0.4	2.6
Highly nontraditional	21.1	11.9	4.9	0.7	0.0	4.1
Dependency status						
Dependent	38.6	21.9	9.3	3.6	1.2	4.5
Independent, no dependents	24.8	12.8	5.7	0.0	0.0	6.3
Independent, with dependents	19.8	12.7	4.3	0.8	0.0	2.5
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	39.4	22.5	9.0	4.6	1.6	4.1
$30,000–69,999	37.8	23.2	8.9	3.4	0.4	3.9
$70,000 or more	39.0	18.2	10.9	2.3	2.3	6.8
Parents' education						
High school or less	31.8	18.0	7.7	2.5	0.5	4.7
Some postsecondary	33.6	17.5	8.3	3.5	1.8	3.8
Bachelor's degree	39.0	24.1	8.9	2.0	0.9	4.3
Advanced degree	37.9	22.7	7.2	3.8	0.0	6.0

Table 17—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who chose their institution for price-related reasons: 1995–96—Continued

	Any price-related reason	Price of attendance was less	Tuition was low	Got more financial aid	Shorter time to finish	Other price reason
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	39.4	22.1	7.1	4.9	1.3	5.7
Part-time	27.1	15.9	8.5	0.4	0.3	3.1
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	30.8	14.2	5.8	5.9	0.3	5.7
Loan aid	29.3	19.3	5.9	3.5	0.0	2.0
No aid	34.6	21.5	9.3	0.4	1.2	3.9
Primary role if working while enrolled						
Student working to meet expenses	44.4	24.1	11.8	3.9	1.1	4.9
Employee who has decided to enroll	20.7	12.7	3.9	0.8	0.4	3.8
Reason for enrolling						
Obtain job skills	24.8	13.7	6.3	0.8	1.1	4.2
Earn degree or certificate	35.2	20.3	8.9	3.1	1.8	3.2
Transfer to 4-year institution	39.3	24.1	9.6	2.8	0.0	3.9
Other	26.7	11.7	5.1	3.8	0.8	6.7

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

NOTE: Students could name more than one reason. Thus, columns do not sum to the total. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Influence-Related Reasons

Overall, 17 percent of beginning postsecondary students enrolling in a public 2-year institution chose that institution at least partly because someone influenced them or they were responding to some other type of influence (such as advertising or informational materials) (table 18). Most commonly mentioned was an "other" influence (10 percent), followed by friends attending the school (5 percent). Students attending for personal or "other" reasons were more likely to give an "other" influence reason than were students enrolling for a degree or to transfer (17 percent versus 7 percent).

Table 18—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who chose their institution for influence-related reasons: 1995–96

	Any influence-related reason	Friends or spouse attended	Parents attended	Parents wanted student to attend	Teacher or counselor recom-mended	Other influence factors
Total	16.7	5.2	0.9	1.0	0.7	9.6
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	17.7	6.1	0.4	1.1	0.2	10.3
Female	15.7	4.3	1.3	1.0	1.2	9.0
Age						
18 years or younger	15.4	5.5	1.8	2.0	0.4	6.9
19–23 years	16.9	5.3	0.4	0.7	0.8	9.9
24 years or older	18.5	4.5	0.0	0.0	1.1	13.8
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	16.0	4.5	0.8	0.9	0.6	10.1
Black, non-Hispanic	18.5	4.9	2.6	0.7	1.2	9.2
Hispanic	18.6	8.4	0.0	2.7	1.2	7.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	17.2	7.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.4
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—
Single parent status						
Not a single parent	16.6	5.4	0.9	1.1	0.5	9.4
Single parent	17.0	3.5	0.5	0.0	2.2	11.6
Traditional/nontraditional status						
Traditional	18.8	8.1	1.3	0.5	0.2	9.4
Minimally nontraditional	13.0	4.3	0.9	1.4	0.7	6.8
Moderately nontraditional	18.4	4.2	1.0	2.1	0.6	11.0
Highly nontraditional	15.7	4.0	0.2	0.0	1.4	11.1
Dependency status						
Dependent	16.4	5.7	1.2	1.5	0.3	8.3
Independent, no dependents	20.7	3.1	0.0	0.0	1.3	17.3
Independent, with dependents	15.2	4.9	0.3	0.0	1.5	9.5
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	18.3	8.4	1.5	0.7	0.6	7.4
$30,000–69,999	14.9	4.0	1.6	2.4	0.2	7.5
$70,000 or more	16.7	5.3	0.0	0.9	0.3	11.2
Parents' education						
High school or less	18.0	5.7	0.9	0.0	0.7	11.4
Some postsecondary	13.3	3.5	0.7	1.5	1.1	7.4
Bachelor's degree	15.9	5.0	0.7	2.0	0.5	8.2
Advanced degree	23.3	7.9	1.4	3.6	0.5	12.5

Table 18—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who chose their institution for influence-related reasons: 1995–96—Continued

	Any influence-related reason	Friends or spouse attended	Parents attended	Parents wanted student to attend	Teacher or counselor recom-mended	Other influence factors
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics						
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	15.7	6.0	1.1	0.6	0.5	8.4
Part-time	17.5	4.4	0.7	1.4	0.9	10.8
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	13.6	3.9	0.4	0.3	1.8	7.7
Loan aid	9.9	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.7	5.3
No aid	19.5	6.2	1.3	1.6	0.1	11.4
Primary role if working while enrolled						
Student working to meet expenses	16.0	6.1	1.5	0.5	0.5	7.9
Employee who has decided to enroll	17.6	4.8	0.0	2.3	0.4	11.2
Reason for enrolling						
Obtain job skills	15.1	3.7	1.8	0.3	1.5	9.3
Earn degree or certificate	14.8	5.0	0.2	1.6	0.7	7.4
Transfer to 4-year institution	15.1	6.2	1.2	0.7	0.4	7.2
Other	24.0	5.5	0.0	1.9	0.7	17.2

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

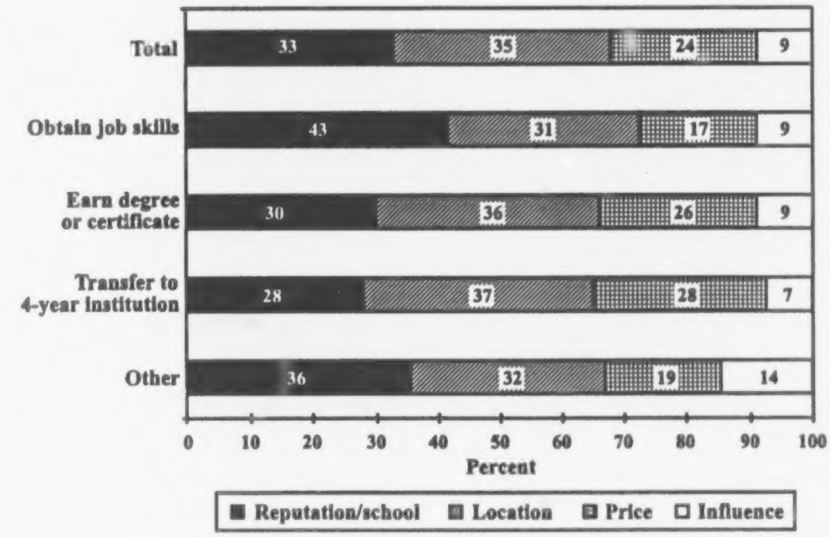
NOTE: Students could name more than one reason. Thus, columns do not sum to the total. Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Most Important Reason

In contrast to beginning postsecondary students at 4-year institutions, who considered the institution's reputation the most important reason for choosing their institution (figure 5), students at public 2-year institutions were about as likely to cite location as reputation (35 percent and 33 percent, respectively) (figure 7). Price was cited as most important somewhat less often (24 percent). However, beginning students at public 2-year institutions were more likely than those at 4-year institutions to consider price the most important reason (24 percent versus 16 percent) (tables 19 and 8).

Figure 7—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions according to the most important reason for choosing their institution, by reason for enrolling: 1995–96



NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

As was done for students beginning at 4-year institutions, multivariate analyses were conducted to determine which student characteristics were associated with identifying specific reasons as most important for choosing an institution. Tables 20–22 show the percentages of students at public 2-year institutions who cited reputation/school-, location-, or price-related reasons as the most important reasons for choosing their institutions and the adjusted percentages after taking into account the covariation of the variables in the table.

Students who considered themselves to be primarily employees were more likely than those who considered themselves to be primarily students to cite reputation as the most important reason for choosing their institution, as were older students (24 years or older) compared to younger students (18 years or younger) (table 20). In addition, black, non-Hispanic and Asian/Pacific

Table 19—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions according to the most important reason for choosing their institution: 1995–96

	Reputation/school	Location	Price	Influence
Total	32.7	34.6	23.5	9.3
Student characteristics				
Gender				
Male	35.2	31.5	24.2	9.1
Female	30.3	37.5	22.8	9.5
Age				
18 years or younger	27.7	36.4	28.3	7.6
19–23 years	31.9	34.3	24.2	9.6
24 years or older	41.8	32.0	14.5	11.7
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	29.1	35.7	25.6	9.6
Black, non-Hispanic	42.1	30.4	17.8	9.7
Hispanic	39.3	36.6	17.6	6.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	54.2	22.3	14.6	8.9
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—
Single parent status				
Not a single parent	31.3	34.8	24.7	9.2
Single parent	44.2	32.9	13.0	9.9
Traditional/nontraditional status				
Traditional	26.8	34.1	29.8	9.4
Minimally nontraditional	34.6	30.9	27.5	7.0
Moderately nontraditional	30.4	37.0	21.3	11.4
Highly nontraditional	39.9	35.9	15.2	9.0
Dependency status				
Dependent	30.5	33.1	27.8	8.6
Independent, no dependents	32.1	35.8	18.8	13.4
Independent, with dependents	39.8	38.3	12.8	9.1
Family income of dependent students				
Less than $30,000	29.4	35.3	26.3	8.9
$30,000–69,999	30.5	32.3	28.6	8.6
$70,000 or more	32.1	31.6	28.2	8.1
Parents' education				
High school or less	32.8	33.5	23.5	10.3
Some postsecondary	33.9	36.9	22.5	6.7
Bachelor's degree	24.7	35.9	30.2	9.2
Advanced degree	34.3	28.8	24.4	12.6

Table 19—Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions according to the most important reason for choosing their institution: 1995–96—Continued

	Reputation/school	Location	Price	Influence
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics				
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	29.5	34.8	27.6	8.1
Part-time	35.5	34.4	19.9	10.3
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	34.1	34.7	22.1	9.1
Loan aid	27.7	45.1	20.3	6.9
No aid	32.6	32.9	24.8	9.8
Primary role if working while enrolled				
Student working to meet expenses	25.1	33.9	33.7	7.4
Employee who has decided to enroll	40.9	33.7	14.5	10.9
Reason for enrolling				
Obtain job skills	42.8	30.8	17.2	9.2
Earn degree or certificate	29.6	35.6	25.5	9.3
Transfer to 4-year institution	27.8	37.0	28.1	7.1
Other	35.5	31.5	19.1	13.9

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

NOTE: Due to rounding, details may not add to 100.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Islander students were more likely than white, non-Hispanic students to consider reputation most important.

Younger students (18 years or younger) were more likely than older students (24 years or older) to cite location as the most important reason for selecting their institution, as were independent students compared to dependent students from families with incomes of less than $30,000 (table 21). Finally, students who considered themselves to be primarily students were more likely than those who considered themselves to be primarily employees to cite price as their most important reason (table 22).

Satisfaction With Choice

As was the case with students enrolled in 4-year institutions, beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions were generally satisfied with their institutions. At least

Table 20—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who reported a reputation/school-related reason as the most important reason for choosing their institution, and the adjusted percentage after taking into account the covariation of the variables listed in the table[1]: 1995–96

	Unadjusted percentage[2]	Adjusted percentage[3]	WLS coefficient[4]	Standard error[5]
Total	32.7	32.7	24.0	9.7
Gender				
Male	35.2	34.7	†	†
Female	30.3	30.5	-4.2	3.9
Age				
18 years or younger	27.7	26.1	†	†
19–23 years	31.9	29.3	3.2	4.6
24 years or older	41.8*	46.8*	20.7	8.6
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	29.1	28.4	†	†
Black, non-Hispanic	42.1	42.3*	13.8	6.2
Hispanic	39.3	40.0	11.6	6.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	54.2	56.3*	27.9	9.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	38.1	9.6	16.8
Single parent status				
Not a single parent	31.3	31.4	†	†
Single parent	44.2*	43.1	11.7	7.3
Income and dependency status				
Dependent: less than $30,000	29.4	34.8	†	†
Dependent: $30,000–69,999	30.5	40.5	5.7	5.6
Dependent: $70,000 or more	32.1	42.8	7.9	7.0
Independent	36.9	20.3	-14.6	8.5
Parents' education				
High school or less	32.8	31.0	†	†
Some postsecondary	33.9	37.2	6.2	5.0
Bachelor's degree	24.7	29.2	-1.8	5.6
Advanced degree	34.3	37.5	6.4	7.4
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	29.5	32.4	†	†
Part-time	35.5	32.8	0.4	4.1
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	34.1	33.9	1.5	7.3
Loan aid	27.7	32.3	†	†
No aid	32.6	31.9	-0.4	7.2
Primary role if working while enrolled				
Not working or student working to meet expenses	25.1	27.3	†	†
Employee who has decided to enroll	40.9*	41.3*	14.0	4.5
Reason for enrolling				
Degree or certificate	29.6*	29.2	-9.6	5.8
Obtain job skills	42.8	38.8	†	†
Transfer to 4-year institution	27.8*	29.8	-9.0	5.6
Other	35.5	34.4	-4.4	5.9

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*$p \leq .05$.

†Not applicable for the reference group.

[1] The italicized group in each category is the reference group being compared.

[2] The estimates are from the NPSAS:96 Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

[3] The percentages are adjusted for differences associated with other variables in the table (see appendix B).

[4] Weighted least squares (WLS) coefficient, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

[5] Standard error of WLS coefficient, adjusted for design effect, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Table 21—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who reported a location-related reason as the most important reason for choosing their institution, and the adjusted percentage after taking into account the covariation of the variables listed in the table[1]: 1995–96

	Unadjusted percentage[2]	Adjusted percentage[3]	WLS coefficient[4]	Standard error[5]
Total	34.6	34.6	42.5	10.0
Gender				
Male	31.5	32.2	†	†
Female	37.5	36.9	4.6	4.0
Age				
18 years or younger	36.4	43.1	†	†
19–23 years	34.3	38.2	-4.9	4.7
24 years or older	32.0	17.0*	-26.1	8.8
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	35.7	35.9	†	†
Black, non-Hispanic	30.4	28.8	-7.1	6.3
Hispanic	36.6	37.1	1.2	6.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	22.3	23.4	-12.4	10.1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	26.5	-9.4	17.2
Single parent status				
Not a single parent	34.8	35.7	†	†
Single parent	32.9	25.4	-10.3	7.5
Income and dependency status				
Dependent: less than $30,000	35.3	28.9	†	†
Dependent: $30,000–69,999	32.3	24.1	-4.8	5.8
Dependent: $70,000 or more	31.6	23.5	-5.4	7.2
Independent	37.4	51.7*	22.9	8.8
Parents' education				
High school or less	33.5	33.8	†	†
Some postsecondary	36.9	36.5	2.7	5.2
Bachelor's degree	35.9	36.3	2.5	5.7
Advanced degree	28.8	31.0	-2.7	7.6
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	34.8	34.3	†	†
Part-time	34.4	34.8	0.5	4.2
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	34.7	34.5	-10.8	7.5
Loan aid	45.1	45.2	†	†
No aid	32.9	33.1	-12.1	7.3
Primary role if working while enrolled				
Not working or student working to meet expenses	33.9	33.8	†	†
Employee who has decided to enroll	33.7	35.9	2.2	4.6
Reason for enrolling				
Degree or certificate	35.6	34.9	4.0	5.9
Obtain job skills	30.8	31.0	†	†
Transfer to 4-year institution	37.0	37.9	6.9	5.8
Other	31.5	32.1	1.2	6.1

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*$p \leq .05$.

†Not applicable for the reference group.

[1] The italicized group in each category is the reference group being compared.

[2] The estimates are from the NPSAS:96 Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

[3] The percentages are adjusted for differences associated with other variables in the table (see appendix B).

[4] Weighted least squares (WLS) coefficient, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

[5] Standard error of WLS coefficient, adjusted for design effect, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Table 22—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who reported a price-related reason as the most important reason for choosing their institution, and the adjusted percentage after taking into account the covariation of the variables listed in the table[1]: 1995–96

	Unadjusted percentage[2]	Adjusted percentage[3]	WLS coefficient[4]	Standard error[5]
Total	23.5	23.5	28.6	8.5
Gender				
Male	24.2	24.0	†	†
Female	22.8	23.0	-1.1	3.4
Age				
18 years or younger	28.3	23.2	†	†
19–23 years	24.2	23.1	-0.1	4.0
24 years or older	14.5*	24.6	1.4	7.5
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	25.6	26.1	†	†
Black, non-Hispanic	17.8	18.9	-7.2	5.4
Hispanic	17.6	16.3	-9.8	5.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	14.6	11.5	-14.6	8.5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	22.8	-3.3	14.6
Single parent status				
Not a single parent	24.7	23.6	†	†
Single parent	13.0*	22.5	-1.1	6.4
Income and dependency status				
Dependent: less than $30,000	26.3	26.0	†	†
Dependent: $30,000–69,999	28.6	25.7	-0.3	4.9
Dependent: $70,000 or more	28.2	24.5	-1.5	6.1
Independent	15.0*	19.6	-6.5	7.4
Parents' education				
High school or less	23.5	25.5	†	†
Some postsecondary	22.5	19.7	-5.7	4.4
Bachelor's degree	30.2	24.6	-0.9	4.9
Advanced degree	24.4	18.9	-6.6	6.5
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	27.6	24.5	†	†
Part-time	19.9*	22.6	-1.9	3.6
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	22.1	22.7	7.1	6.4
Loan aid	20.3	15.6	†	†
No aid	24.8	25.1	9.6	6.2
Primary role if working while enrolled				
Not working or student working to meet expenses	33.7	29.9	†	†
Employee who has decided to enroll	14.5*	13.0*	-16.9	3.9
Reason for enrolling				
Degree or certificate	25.5	26.7	5.0	5.0
Obtain job skills	17.2	21.8	†	†
Transfer to 4-year institution	28.1	24.5	2.8	4.9
Other	19.1	19.9	-1.8	5.2

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

*p ≤ .05.

†Not applicable for the reference group.

[1] The italicized group in each category is the reference group being compared.

[2] The estimates are from the NPSAS:96 Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

[3] The percentages are adjusted for differences associated with other variables in the table (see appendix B).

[4] Weighted least squares (WLS) coefficient, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

[5] Standard error of WLS coefficient, adjusted for design effect, multiplied by 100 to reflect percentage (see appendix B).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

8 out of 10 students were satisfied with each aspect of their institution about which they were questioned (table 23). There was little notable variation by student characteristics.

Reflecting the typically lower tuition at public 2-year institutions, students were more likely to be satisfied with the price of attending their institution (89 percent) than were students at 4-year institutions (68 percent, table 13). Students at public 2-year institutions without financial aid were less likely than those with aid to be satisfied with the price of attending: 85 percent of unaided students were satisfied, compared with 94 percent of aided students without loans and 93 percent of aided students with loans.

Asian/Pacific Islander students at public 2-year institutions appeared to be less satisfied than those from other racial–ethnic backgrounds with the campus climate regarding students of different racial or ethnic backgrounds (83 percent versus more than 90 percent for other groups). However, these differences were not statistically significant.

Like their counterparts at 4-year institutions, beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions were generally satisfied with the activities in which they had participated and the services they had used. Nine out of 10 were satisfied with cultural activities, counseling services, and sports and recreational activities (table 24). Students who considered themselves primarily employees appeared to be less satisfied with job placement services (72 percent) than those who considered themselves primarily students (88 percent), but the difference was not statistically significant. As beginning postsecondary students, relatively few would have used this service.

Summary

Beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions mentioned location reasons for choosing which institution to attend more often than reputation, price, or influence factors. Although beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions were about as likely as those at 4-year institutions to mention location-related reasons, their specific reasons were different, with public 2-year students being more likely than 4-year students to choose being close to home, and less likely to use liking the campus as a criterion for their choice.

Reputation was the next most mentioned consideration, but exactly what students had in mind is difficult to determine, because most of their reasons were in the "other" reputation/school-related category. The institution's program offerings or instructional practices are possible reasons. Beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions were less likely than those at 4-year institutions to base their decision on the overall reputation of the institution as a good school. Price was mentioned by public 2-year students less often than location- or

Table 23—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who were satisfied with various aspects of their first-year experience: 1995–96

	Prestige of institution	Campus climate	Price of attending	Course availability	Class size	Instructors' ability to teach	Intellectual growth	Social life
Total	88.0	95.3	89.0	83.6	94.3	90.4	91.1	89.2
Student characteristics								
Gender								
Male	86.8	95.6	90.3	81.5	93.4	91.3	89.1	89.3
Female	89.1	95.1	87.8	85.5	95.1	89.6	92.9	89.1
Age								
18 years or younger	86.2	96.3	89.2	83.4	93.6	90.5	90.7	89.5
19–23 years	84.4	93.0	86.5	81.3	92.4	88.3	89.1	90.1
24 years or older	97.1	97.5	92.7	87.6	98.4	93.9	95.1	87.1
Race–ethnicity								
White, non-Hispanic	88.7	96.2	92.1	85.1	95.6	90.7	92.2	88.8
Black, non-Hispanic	85.8	96.1	85.6	79.8	93.3	89.4	87.9	88.5
Hispanic	87.7	93.1	78.0	79.7	88.5	90.1	88.1	90.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	82.6	82.6	76.0	75.5	88.8	88.2	95.9	97.3
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Single parent status								
Not a single parent	87.8	95.5	89.3	83.6	94.3	90.6	90.6	89.0
Single parent	89.1	94.1	87.0	83.1	94.5	89.0	95.4	90.9
Traditional/nontraditional status								
Traditional	82.4	93.9	92.9	84.3	94.2	89.8	91.1	89.9
Minimally nontraditional	91.9	96.6	90.1	86.7	94.4	91.0	90.1	90.2
Moderately nontraditional	85.9	95.3	84.4	79.1	92.6	88.9	90.3	89.2
Highly nontraditional	93.1	95.7	89.1	85.0	96.3	92.4	93.0	87.3
Dependency status								
Dependent	85.4	95.1	88.1	82.7	93.0	89.7	89.7	89.7
Independent, no dependents	93.6	95.8	94.5	85.2	98.8	90.4	92.2	85.7
Independent, with dependents	93.2	95.9	88.7	85.3	95.7	92.8	95.1	89.5
Family income of dependent students								
Less than $30,000	86.8	94.4	85.8	77.7	90.4	90.4	88.2	86.8
$30,000–69,999	85.0	95.5	88.3	85.3	93.6	89.5	89.8	91.5
$70,000 or more	83.9	95.0	91.3	84.8	95.8	89.1	91.7	90.2
Parents' education								
High school or less	92.3	95.8	88.0	86.2	95.2	92.2	91.9	88.1
Some postsecondary	86.6	94.8	88.3	83.1	94.8	89.7	92.2	88.8
Bachelor's degree	77.2	94.5	90.1	78.6	89.8	88.0	88.5	90.4
Advanced degree	88.6	95.2	93.8	82.8	95.8	88.5	86.5	91.0

Table 23—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who were satisfied with various aspects of their first-year experience: 1995–96—Continued

	Prestige of institution	Campus climate	Price of attending	Course availability	Class size	Instructors' ability to teach	Intellectual growth	Social life
Most important reason for attending								
Price-related	86.5	96.0	90.3	79.6	94.5	89.5	91.5	87.3
Influence-related	91.2	95.5	93.0	89.3	96.3	84.8	88.2	88.8
Location-related	86.3	96.1	87.8	81.7	93.0	90.0	90.8	88.9
Reputation/school-related	90.5	94.9	88.9	86.7	94.8	93.3	91.8	90.9
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics								
Attendance intensity								
Full-time	85.1	95.2	92.9	84.1	95.1	89.4	91.5	90.9
Part-time	90.7	95.6	85.6	83.0	93.6	91.5	90.8	87.6
Aid status								
Aided, no loans	92.1	95.8	94.3	86.5	94.5	92.6	92.3	91.2
Loan aid	89.6	93.9	93.4	82.8	95.3	88.7	95.9	91.8
No aid	85.3	95.3	85.1	82.0	94.0	89.5	89.6	87.5
Primary role if working while enrolled								
Student working to meet expenses	84.7	94.7	88.3	80.9	93.2	89.4	89.6	87.7
Employee who has decided to enroll	91.6	96.0	88.7	87.7	95.7	89.3	91.3	89.5
Reason for enrolling								
Obtain job skills	95.6	97.0	88.8	86.5	95.6	90.2	91.9	87.8
Earn degree or certificate	89.7	95.4	89.3	83.9	96.3	91.0	92.9	89.1
Transfer to 4-year institution	84.7	95.0	89.0	81.6	95.3	91.1	90.6	89.4
Other	85.3	94.6	89.6	83.2	88.8	89.0	90.4	89.8

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

reputation/school-related reasons. However, students who planned to transfer were more likely than those enrolling for job skills or "other" reasons to consider the price of attending in making their choice.

The most important reason for choosing their institution varied according to whether students considered themselves primarily students or employees. The former were more likely than the latter to have cited price as the most important reason for choosing their institution. In contrast, students who considered themselves primarily employees were more likely than those who

Table 24—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who had used certain services who were satisfied with them: 1995–96

	Cultural activities	Counseling services	Job placement services	Sports and recreational activities
Total	95.6	90.9	83.4	94.0
Student characteristics				
Gender				
Male	94.1	93.5	81.1	92.7
Female	96.8	88.6	85.7	97.0
Age				
18 years or younger	96.0	92.8	86.5	92.0
19–23 years	93.8	88.0	75.7	95.7
24 years or older	—	91.5	—	—
Race–ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	96.9	91.1	84.0	95.1
Black, non-Hispanic	—	87.9	71.0	89.1
Hispanic	—	95.1	—	97.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—
Single parent status				
Not a single parent	95.2	90.7	82.9	93.9
Single parent	—	92.7	—	—
Traditional/ nontraditional status				
Traditional	98.9	94.3	86.1	96.7
Minimally nontraditional	94.2	86.8	67.6	97.6
Moderately nontraditional	89.4	90.3	89.4	84.9
Highly nontraditional	—	91.4	91.5	—
Dependency status				
Dependent	94.6	91.0	80.8	94.7
Independent, no dependents	—	81.0	—	—
Independent, with dependents	—	95.5	91.5	—
Family income of dependent students				
Less than $30,000	92.6	90.7	77.6	95.8
$30,000–69,999	93.9	93.3	87.0	94.8
$70,000 or more	—	86.1	—	93.4
Parents' education				
High school or less	97.0	91.9	82.4	95.5
Some postsecondary	100.0	94.0	88.4	96.0
Bachelor's degree	88.8	83.3	—	89.7
Advanced degree	—	94.2	—	94.0

Table 24—Percentage of beginning postsecondary students enrolled in public 2-year institutions who had used certain services who were satisfied with them: 1995–96—Continued

	Cultural activities	Counseling services	Job placement services	Sports and recreational activities
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics				
Attendance intensity				
Full-time	96.8	90.3	82.3	95.4
Part-time	93.7	91.6	85.0	91.0
Aid status				
Aided, no loans	98.8	94.4	89.0	97.1
Loan aid	—	80.4	—	90.3
No aid	92.4	90.7	81.2	93.1
Primary role if working while enrolled				
Student working to meet expenses	94.5	90.2	87.6	92.8
Employee who has decided to enroll	—	92.7	72.0	98.0
Reason for enrolling				
Obtain job skills	—	93.6	84.9	99.7
Earn degree or certificate	94.7	95.1	90.4	93.5
Transfer to 4-year institution	94.5	86.5	81.3	91.6
Other	100.0	92.6	81.3	96.6

—Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

considered themselves primarily students to cite a reputation/school-related reason as the most important.

As was the case with 4-year students, public 2-year students were generally satisfied with most aspects of their institutions. They were more likely to be satisfied with the price of attending than were 4-year students.

5. Conclusion

Of all beginning postsecondary students in 1995–96, 25 percent enrolled at public 4-year institutions, 15 percent at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, and 46 percent at public 2-year institutions. The remaining 14 percent enrolled at public less-than-2-year institutions; private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year institutions; and private, for-profit institutions.

Enrollment patterns varied with student characteristics. Beginning postsecondary students who were older, single parents, nontraditional, independent, and who had parents who had not attended college were less likely to enroll in 4-year institutions. In addition, the majority of students who worked and considered themselves primarily employees who enrolled in school as opposed to students working to meet expenses enrolled in public 2-year institutions. About two-thirds of traditional students enrolled in public or private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions. Among dependent beginning postsecondary students, those from families with higher incomes ($70,000 or more) were more likely than their counterparts from lower income families to enroll in private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions.

Beginning postsecondary students at both public and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely to cite reputation as the most important reason for attending than any other reason. However, students at public institutions were more likely than those at private, not-for-profit institutions to give location or price as the most important reason, and less likely to cite reputation. In contrast to 4-year students, beginning students at public 2-year institutions were about as likely to cite location as they were to cite reputation as the most important reason.

Most beginning postsecondary students reported being satisfied with the various aspects of their first-year experience about which they were asked, but they varied somewhat by type of institution. For example, beginning students at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions were more likely to be satisfied with course availability, class size, and instructors' ability to teach than were their counterparts at public 4-year institutions. On the other hand, students at public 4-year institutions were more likely than those at private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions to be satisfied with the price of attending. Beginning postsecondary students at public 2-year institutions were the most likely to be satisfied with this aspect of their first-year experience.

Appendix A—Glossary

This glossary describes the variables used in this report. The variables were taken directly from the NPSAS:96 Undergraduate Data Analysis System (DAS), an NCES software application that generates tables from the NPSAS:96 data. A description of the DAS software can be found in appendix B. The labels in capital letters correspond to the names of the variables in the DAS.

In the index below, the variables in each section are listed in the order they appear in the report; the glossary is in alphabetical order by variable name (displayed in the right-hand column). Some items were reported only by the student during the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI). Variables using information only from this source are identified as such.

Glossary Index

Student Characteristics

Gender	GENDER
Age	AGE
Race–ethnicity	RACE
Single parent status	SINGLPAR
Traditional/nontraditional status	RISKINDX
Dependency status	DEPEND2
Family income of dependent students	INCOME
Parents' education	PAREDUC
SAT score—combined verbal and math	SATTOTAL
ACT composite score	ACT

Enrollment, Financial Aid, and Work

Degree program	DEGLAST
Attendance intensity	ATTNST1
Aid status	LOANAID
Primary role if working while enrolled	SEROLE
Institution type, level, or control	SECTOR
Reason for enrolling	SBENRPUR

Location-Related Reasons

Any location-related reason	LOCREL
Close to home	SCHCLOSE
Could live at home	LIVEHOME
Liked the campus	SURROUND
Close to job	SCHLNWRK
Other location reason	LOCATION

Reputation/School-Related Reasons

Any reputation-related reason	REPREL
School has good reputation	REPUTATN
Job placement	PLACEMNT
Facilities/equipment	FACILITY
Faculty reputation	PROFESOR
Other reputation reason	OTHRSN

Price-Related Reasons

Any price-related reason	COSTREL
Price of attendance was less	COSTLIVE
Tuition was low	TUITLESS
Got more financial aid	MOREAID
Shorter time to finish	SHORTER
Other price reason	OTHCOST

Influence-Related Reasons

Any influence-related reason	INFLREL
Friends or spouse attended	FRIENDAT
Parent(s) attended	PARNATT
Parent(s) wanted student to attend	PARENT
Teacher or counselor recommended	TEACHER
Other influence factors	INFLUNCE
Most important reason for attending	SBRSNMST

STUDENT SATISFACTION

Prestige of institution	SIPRSTG
Campus climate	SICLIMT
Price of attending	SICOST
Course availability	SICOURS
Class size	SICLSIZE
Instructors' ability to teach	SITEACH
Intellectual growth	SIINTELL
Social life	SISOCLIF
Cultural activities	CULTUR
Job placement services	JOBPLC
Counseling services	COUNSEL
Sports and recreational activities	SPORTS

ACT composite score	**ACT**

Indicates the student's composite ACT score, which was constructed from the institution-reported ACT score. If the institution report was not available, the student-reported score was used. For this analysis, the scores were categorized as follows:

Missing
Less than 19
19–24
25 or more

Age	**AGE**

Indicates the student's age as of 12/31/95. Calculated from date of birth (BDATE).

18 years or younger
19–23 years
24 years or older

Attendance intensity	**ATTNST1**

Indicates the student's attendance intensity and persistence at the NPSAS institution during 1995–96. Intensity refers to the student's full- or part-time attendance while enrolled. Persistence refers to the number of months a student was enrolled during the year at the NPSAS institution. Because this information is based only on the report of the NPSAS institution, it does not accurately represent the experience of students who transferred during 1995–96 (approximately 5 percent to 10 percent) and is not strictly comparable to prior NPSAS surveys. Students were considered to have enrolled for a full year at the NPSAS institution if they were enrolled 8 or more months during the NPSAS year. Months did not have to be contiguous, and students did not have to be enrolled for a full month in order to be considered enrolled for that month. In prior NPSAS surveys, full year has been defined as 9 or more months. This proved to be unrealistic in NPSAS:96 because at a number of institutions, including several major universities, there were no undergraduates who attended more than 8 months full time, and these students were paying the normal tuition charged for a complete academic year. Comparability with prior NPSAS surveys may be achieved by using the variable ATTNST3, which utilizes the 9-month definition of full year.

Full-time	Student attended full time all months enrolled.
Part-time	Student attended part time all or part of the year.

Price of attendance was less	**COSTLIVE**

One of a series of variables indicating whether the student reported various reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. Student response to the question "Why did you decide to attend (fill in school)?" Asked on the student CATI. The answers were categorized as follows:

Location-related reasons:

SCHCLOSE	Close to home
LIVEHOME	Could live at home
SURROUND	Liked the campus
SCHLNWRK	Close to job
LOCATION	Other location-related reason

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Reputation/school-related reasons:

REPUTATN	School has a good reputation
PLACEMNT	Job placement
FACILITY	Facilities/equipment
PROFESOR	Faculty reputation
OTHRSN	Other reputation/school-related reason

Price-related reasons:

COSTLIVE	Price of attendance was less
TUITLESS	Tuition was low
MOREAID	Got more financial aid
SHORTER	Shorter time to finish
OTHCOST	Other price-related reason

Influence-related reasons:

FRIENDAT	Friends or spouse attended the school
PARNATT	Parent(s) attended the school
PARENT	Parent(s) wanted student to attend
TEACHER	Teacher or guidance counselor recommended
INFLUNCE	Other influence factors

NOTE: Related responses are aggregated in COSTREL, LOCREL, REPREL, and INFLREL. The most important reason is given in SBRSNMST.

Any price-related reason **COSTREL**

Indicates whether the student cited any price-related reasons for attending the NPSAS institution (Yes/No). Price-related reasons included shorter time to finish (SHORTER), price of attendance was less (COSTLIVE), got more financial aid (MOREAID), tuition was low (TUITLESS), and other price-related reason (OTHCOST). For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Counseling services **COUNSEL**

For students who used counseling services at the NPSAS institution, variable indicates whether student was satisfied with these services (Yes/No). One of a series of variables examining students' use of and satisfaction with services and activities at the NPSAS institution. Student response to the question "During 1995–96, how often did you use the counseling services? Were you satisfied with the services?" Asked on the student CATI.

Cultural activities **CULTUR**

For students who participated in cultural activities at the NPSAS institution, variable indicates whether the student was satisfied with these services (Yes/No). One of a series of variables examining students' use of and satisfaction with services and activities at the NPSAS institution. Student response to the question "During 1995–96, how often did you participate in activities including music, art, and drama? Were you satisfied with the activities?" Asked on the student CATI.

Degree program **DEGLAST**

Degree program in which student was enrolled in the last term, as reported by the institution.

Certificate or award	Student pursuing a certificate or formal award other than an associate's or bachelor's degree
Associate's degree	Student pursuing an associate's degree
Bachelor's degree	Student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree
Undergraduate, nondegree program	Student is not in any of the above degree programs

Dependency status **DEPEND2**

Student dependency status for financial aid. Students were considered independent if they met one of the following criteria:

1. Student was 24 years or older as of 12/31/95;
2. Student was a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces;
3. Student was enrolled in a graduate or professional program (beyond a bachelor's degree) in 1995–96;
4. Student was married;
5. Student was an orphan or ward of the court; or
6. Student had legal dependents other than spouse. (Students were considered to have dependents if they had any dependents other than a spouse.)

Dependent
Independent, no dependents
Independent, with dependents

NOTE: In some tables (multivariate analyses) categories are collapsed and combined with income categories.

Facilities/equipment **FACILITY**

Indicates whether a student reported attending the NPSAS institution because of its facilities and equipment (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend his or her institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Friends or spouse attended **FRIENDAT**

Constructed from student-reported reason for attending NPSAS institution: friends or spouse attended the school. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution (Yes/No). For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Gender **GENDER**

Male
Female

Family income of dependent students **INCOME**

The 1994 total income of dependent students' parents or guardians.

Less than $30,000
$30,000–69,999
$70,000 or more

Any influence-related reason **INFLREL**

Indicates whether the student cited any influence-related reasons for attending the NPSAS institution (Yes/No). Influence-related reasons included parent went there (PARNATT), friends/spouse went there (FRIENDAT), parent(s) wanted student to go (PARENT), teacher or counselor recommended (TEACHER), and other influence factors (INFLUNCE). For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Other influence factors **INFLUNCE**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because of an "other" influence factor (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Job placement services **JOBPLC**

For students who used job placement services at the NPSAS institution, variable indicates whether the student was satisfied with these services (Yes/No). One of a series of variables examining students use of and satisfaction with services and activities at the NPSAS institution. Student response to the question "During 1995–96, how often did you use the job placement services? Were you satisfied with the services?" Asked on the student CATI.

Could live at home **LIVEHOME**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution so he/she could live at home (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Aid status **LOANAID**

Indicates the student's aid status with respect to loans (including PLUS loans).

Aided, no loans	Student received student aid, such as grants or work-study, but no loans.
Loan aid	Student received loans only or loans in combination with other types of aid.
No aid	Student received no financial aid.

Other location reason **LOCATION**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution for an "other" location reason (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Any location related-reason **LOCREL**

Indicates whether the student cited location-related reasons for attending the NPSAS institution (Yes/No). Location-related reasons included close to job (SCHLNWRK), could live at home (LIVEHOME), close to home (SCHCLOSE), liked the campus (SURROUND), and other location-related reasons (LOCATION). For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Got more financial aid **MOREAID**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because more financial aid was available (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Other price reason **OTHCOST**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution for an "other" price-related reason (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Other reputation reason **OTHRSN**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution for an "other" reputation- or school-related reason (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Parents' education **PAREDUC**

The highest level of education completed by the student's parent (mother or father, whoever had the highest level).

High school diploma or equivalent or less
Some postsecondary education (less than a bachelor's degree)
Bachelor's degree
Advanced degree

Parent(s) wanted student to attend **PARENT**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because his/her parent(s) wanted the student to attend (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Parent(s) attended **PARNATT**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because his/her parent(s) attended the school (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Job placement **PLACEMNT**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution for job placement reasons (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Faculty reputation **PROFESOR**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because of the faculty's reputation (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Race–ethnicity **RACE**

Race–ethnicity as reported by the student or, if not available from the student, by the institution.

White, non-Hispanic	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East (except those of Hispanic origin).
Black, non-Hispanic	A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa, who is not of Hispanic origin.
Hispanic	A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
Asian/Pacific Islander	A person having origins in any of the peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or Pacific Islands. This includes people from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, Samoa, India, and Vietnam.
American Indian/Alaskan Native	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

Any reputation-related reason **REPREL**

Indicates whether the student cited any reputation-related reasons for attending the NPSAS institution (Yes/No). Reputation/school-related reasons included school has a good reputation (REPUTATN), job placement (PLACEMNT), facilities/equipment (FACILITY), faculty reputation (PROFESOR), and other reputation-related reason (OTHRSN). For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

School has good reputation **REPUTATN**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because the school had a good reputation (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Traditional/nontraditional status **RISKINDX**

Based on an index of risk from 0–7 related to 7 characteristics known to adversely affect persistence and attainment. Characteristics include delayed enrollment, no high school diploma (including GED recipients), part-time enrollment, financial independence, having dependents other than spouse, single parent status, and working full time while enrolled.

Traditional	Student had no risk factors
Minimally nontraditional	Student had 1 risk factor
Moderately nontraditional	Student had 2 or 3 risk factors
Highly nontraditional	Student had 4 or more risk factors.

SAT score—combined verbal and math **SATTOTAL**

Equal to the sum of the scores on the SAT math section and the SAT verbal section. Constructed from institution-reported SAT scores. If the institution report was not available, student-reported scores were used. Composite score was set to missing if one or more component variables were missing, or if the combined score was less than 400.

Missing
Less than 900
900–1199
1200 or more

Reason for enrolling **SBENRPUR**

Indicates the student's primary reason for enrolling in a 2-year or less-than-2-year institution. The responses were categorized as follows:

Obtain job skills	Student enrolled to obtain job skills.
Degree or certificate	Student enrolled to earn a degree or certificate.
Transfer to 4-year institution	Student enrolled intending to transfer to a 4-year institution.
Other	Student enrolled intending to transfer to a 2-year institution or to another institution (type yet to be decided), or for personal enrichment.

Most important reason for attending **SBRSNMST**

Student response to the question "Which of the reasons you mentioned was most important to your selection of [NPSAS school]?" The responses were categorized as follows:

Shorter time to finish
Prices were less
Got more financial aid
Tuition was low
Other price reason
Parents went there
Friends/spouse went there
Parents wanted student to go there
Teacher/guidance counselor recommended
Other influence factors
Close to job
Could live at home
Close to home
Other location reason
Liked the campus
School has good reputation
Job placement
Facilities/equipment
Faculty reputation
Other reputation/school reason

Location-related reasons:	Composed of close to home; close to job; could live at home; liked the campus; other location-related reason.
Reputation/school-related reasons:	Composed of facilities/equipment; school had a good reputation; job placement; faculty reputation; other reputation/school-related reason.
Price-related reasons:	Composed of tuition was low; prices were less; got more financial aid; shorter time to finish; other price-related reason.
Influence-related reasons:	Composed of friends/spouse attended the school; parent(s) wanted student to attend; parent(s) attended the school; teacher/guidance counselor recommended; other influence-related reason.

Close to home **SCHCLOSE**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because it was close to the student's home (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Close to job SCHLNWRK

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because it was close to the student's job (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Institution type, level, or control SECTOR

Indicates the level and control of the NPSAS institution where the student was surveyed. Constructed by combining the level of the NPSAS institution and the control of that institution. In some tables only level or control are shown and in others they are combined.

Control

Public	A postsecondary institution operated by publicly elected or appointed officials where the program and activities are under the control of these officials and that is supported primarily by public funds.
Private, not-for-profit	A postsecondary institution that is controlled by an independent governing board and incorporated under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
Private, for-profit	A postsecondary institution that is privately owned and operated as a profit-making enterprise. These institutions include career colleges and proprietary institutions.

Level

4-year	An institution that offers 4-year baccalaureate degrees. These institutions may or may not also offer master's, doctoral, or first-professional degrees in one or more programs as the highest degree awarded.
2-year	An institution whose program of study results in an award or degree below the baccalaureate level, and is at least 2 years but less than 4 years in duration. These institutions include many community and junior colleges.
Less-than-2-year	An institution whose normal program of study is less than 2 years in duration.

Primary role if working while enrolled SEROLE

Student response to the question "While you were working, would you say that you were primarily a student working to meet expenses or an employee who's decided to enroll in school?" Asked on student CATI (Yes/No).

Student working to meet expenses
Employee who has decided to enroll

Shorter time to finish **SHORTER**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution to finish in a shorter time (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Campus climate **SICLIMT**

Indicates if the student was satisfied with the campus climate (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported satisfaction with selected characteristics of his/her institution. Student response to the question "Were you satisfied with the campus climate?" Asked on the student CATI.

Class size **SICLSIZE**

Indicates if the student was satisfied with class size (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported satisfaction with selected characteristics of his/her institution. Student response to the question "Were you satisfied with class size?" Asked on the student CATI.

Price of attending **SICOST**

Indicates if the student was satisfied with the price of attending his or her institution (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported satisfaction with selected characteristics of his/her institution. Student response to the question "Were you satisfied with the price of attendance?" Asked on the student CATI.

Course availability **SICOURS**

Indicates if the student was satisfied with course availability (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported satisfaction with selected characteristics of his/her institution. Student response to the question "Were you satisfied with course availability?" Asked on the student CATI.

Intellectual growth **SIINTELL**

Indicates if student was satisfied with his or her intellectual growth (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported satisfaction with selected characteristics of his/her institution. Student response to the question "Were you satisfied with your intellectual growth?" Asked on the student CATI.

Single parent status **SINGLPAR**

Identifies independent students who were single parents. Students were considered to be single parents if they had dependents and were not married. NOTE: The number of dependents does not distinguish between dependent children and other dependents such as parents or relatives. Approximately 3 percent of unmarried individuals with dependents did not have children.

Not a single parent
Single parent

Prestige of institution **SIPRSTG**

Indicates if student was satisfied with the prestige of the institution (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported satisfaction with selected characteristics of his/her institution. Student response to the question "Were you satisfied with the prestige of the institution?" Asked on the student CATI.

Social life **SISOCLIF**

Indicates if student was satisfied with his or her social life (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported satisfaction with selected characteristics of his/her institution. Student response to the question "Were you satisfied with your social life?" Asked on the student CATI.

Instructors' ability to teach **SITEACH**

Indicates if student was satisfied with the instructors' ability to teach (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported satisfaction with selected characteristics of his/her institution. Student response to the question "Were you satisfied with the instructors' ability to teach?" Asked on the student CATI.

Sports and recreational activities **SPORTS**

For students who participated in sports and recreational activities at the NPSAS institution, variable indicates whether the student was satisfied with these services (Yes/No). One of a series of variables examining students' use of and satisfaction with services and activities at the NPSAS institution. Student response to the question "During 1995–96, how often did you participate in sports and recreational activities at the NPSAS institution? Were you satisfied with the facilities?" Asked on the student CATI.

Liked the campus **SURROUND**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because he/she liked the campus (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Teacher or counselor recommended **TEACHER**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because of a teacher or guidance counselor recommendation (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Tuition was low **TUITLESS**

Indicates whether the student reported attending the NPSAS institution because tuition was low (Yes/No). One of a series of variables indicating student-reported reasons for choosing to attend the NPSAS institution. For a complete description, see COSTLIVE. Asked on the student CATI.

Appendix B—Technical Notes and Methodology

The 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96)

The 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96) is a comprehensive nationwide study representing approximately 16.7 million undergraduates. The study is conducted by the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to determine how students and their families pay for postsecondary education. It also describes the demographic and other characteristics of students enrolled. The study is based on a nationally representative sample of approximately 41,400 undergraduates (including 27,000 student interviews) enrolled in more than 830 postsecondary education institutions. Students attending all types and levels of institutions are represented in the sample, including public and private institutions and less-than-2-year institutions, 2-year institutions, and 4-year colleges and universities. The weighted effective response rate for the telephone interviews was 76.2 percent. The study is designed to address the policy questions resulting from the rapid growth of financial aid programs, and the succession of changes in financial aid program policies since 1986. The first NPSAS study was conducted in 1986–87, then again in 1989–90 and 1992–93.[22]

Accuracy of Estimates

The statistics in this report are estimates derived from a sample. Two broad categories of error occur in such estimates: sampling and nonsampling errors. Sampling errors occur because observations are made only on samples of students, not on entire populations. Nonsampling errors occur not only in sample surveys but also in complete censuses of entire populations. Nonsampling errors can be attributed to a number of sources: inability to obtain complete information about all students in all institutions in the sample (some students or institutions refused to participate, or students participated but answered only certain items); ambiguous definitions; differences in interpreting questions; inability or unwillingness to give correct information; mistakes in recording or coding data; and other errors of collecting, processing, sampling, and imputing missing data.

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[22] For more information on the NPSAS survey, consult U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Methodology Report for the 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study* (NCES 98-073) (Washington, D.C.: 1998).

Data Analysis System

The estimates presented in this report were produced using the NPSAS:96 Data Analysis System (DAS). The DAS software makes it possible for users to specify and generate their own tables from NPSAS:96 data. With the DAS, users can replicate or expand upon the tables presented in this report. In addition to the table estimates, the DAS calculates proper standard errors[23] and weighted sample sizes for these estimates. For example, table B1 contains standard errors that correspond to table 1 in the text, and was generated by the NPSAS:96 DAS. If the number of valid cases is too small to produce a reliable estimate (fewer than 30 cases), the DAS prints the message "low-N" instead of the estimate.

In addition to tables, the DAS will also produce a correlation matrix of selected variables to be used for linear regression models. Included in the output with the correlation matrix are the design effects (DEFTs) for each variable in the matrix. Since statistical procedures generally compute regression coefficients based on simple random sample assumptions, the standard errors must be adjusted with the design effects to take into account the NPSAS:96 stratified sampling method. (See discussion under "Statistical Procedures" below for the adjustment procedure.)

The DAS can be accessed electronically at www.PEDAR-DAS.org. For more information about the NPSAS:96 Data Analysis Systems, contact:

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Washington, DC 20208-5652
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Internet address: Adamico@inet.ed.gov

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[23] The NPSAS sample is not a simple random sample, and therefore, simple random sample techniques for estimating sampling errors cannot be applied to these data. The DAS takes into account the complexity of the sampling procedures and calculates standard errors appropriate for such samples. The method for computing sampling errors used by the DAS involves approximating the estimator by the linear terms of a Taylor series expansion. The procedure is typically referred to as the Taylor series method.

Table B1—Standard errors for table 1: Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students according to institution type: 1995–96

	Public less-than-2-year	Public 2-year	Public 4-year	Private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year	Private, not-for-profit 4-year	Private, for-profit
Total	0.4	1.3	1.0	0.2	0.7	0.8
Student characteristics						
Gender						
Male	0.4	1.7	1.2	0.3	0.9	1.0
Female	0.4	1.7	1.1	0.2	0.9	1.2
Age						
18 years or younger	0.2	1.7	1.4	0.2	1.1	0.6
19–23 years	0.3	1.9	1.3	0.3	1.0	1.0
24 years or older	1.2	2.5	0.9	0.4	0.9	2.0
Race–ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic	0.5	1.7	1.2	0.2	0.9	0.8
Black, non-Hispanic	0.7	3.7	2.4	0.3	2.6	3.3
Hispanic	0.4	4.5	3.8	0.7	1.7	3.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.6	4.8	4.4	0.9	2.7	1.3
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.3	10.8	6.7	6.1	2.3	6.3
Single parent status						
Not a single parent	0.3	1.4	1.0	0.2	0.8	0.7
Single parent	1.0	3.7	1.1	0.5	0.7	3.2
Traditional/nontraditional status						
Traditional	0.2	2.0	1.7	0.2	1.4	0.5
Minimally nontraditional	0.4	2.1	1.6	0.2	0.9	1.0
Moderately nontraditional	0.7	2.1	1.0	0.5	0.8	1.7
Highly nontraditional	0.8	2.4	0.9	0.4	0.5	2.0
Dependency status						
Dependent	0.2	1.6	1.2	0.2	1.0	0.5
Independent, no dependents	1.7	3.3	1.3	0.4	1.3	2.3
Independent, with dependents	0.7	2.8	0.8	0.5	0.5	2.4
Family income of dependent students						
Less than $30,000	0.3	2.5	2.0	0.3	1.1	1.2
$30,000–69,999	0.3	1.9	1.4	0.2	1.1	0.5
$70,000 or more	0.1	2.4	1.9	0.2	1.8	0.4
Parents' education						
High school or less	0.6	1.8	1.1	0.3	0.8	1.3
Some postsecondary	0.5	2.5	1.8	0.3	1.0	1.0
Bachelor's degree	0.5	2.4	1.8	0.2	1.2	0.7
Advanced degree	0.1	2.6	2.2	0.2	2.5	0.5

Table B1—Standard errors for table 1: Percentage distribution of beginning postsecondary students according to institution type: 1995–96—Continued

	Public less-than-2-year	Public 2-year	Public 4-year	Private, not-for-profit less-than-4-year	Private, not-for-profit 4-year	Private, for-profit
SAT—combined verbal and math						
Less than 900	0.5	1.6	1.1	0.2	0.6	1.0
900–1199	0.0	4.3	3.7	0.9	3.0	0.4
1200 or more	0.0	2.3	2.7	0.3	2.4	0.1
Missing	0.0	1.9	4.3	0.1	4.4	0.3
ACT composite score						
Less than 19	0.5	1.6	1.1	0.3	0.8	1.0
19–24	0.3	5.3	4.3	0.5	1.7	0.2
25 or more	0.0	3.3	2.9	0.3	2.1	0.2
Missing	0.0	2.8	3.5	0.1	3.2	0.2
Enrollment, financial aid, and work characteristics						
Degree program						
Certificate or award	1.9	4.3	1.1	0.6	0.9	3.8
Associate's degree	0.0	1.3	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.7
Bachelor's degree	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	1.6	0.2
Undergraduate, nondegree program	0.1	3.1	2.3	0.7	1.0	1.0
Attendance intensity						
Full-time	0.5	1.7	1.3	0.3	1.0	1.0
Part-time	0.3	1.4	0.9	0.3	0.5	0.8
Aid status						
Aided, no loans	0.8	2.4	1.7	0.3	1.1	1.3
Loan aid	0.2	1.7	1.7	0.5	1.5	2.1
No aid	0.4	1.6	1.1	0.2	0.7	0.8
Primary role if working while enrolled						
Student working to meet expenses	0.3	1.7	1.2	0.2	1.0	0.7
Employee who has decided to enroll	0.5	2.0	0.9	0.3	0.9	1.3
Reason for enrolling*						
Obtain job skills	1.5	3.0	(*)	0.6	(*)	2.8
Earn degree or certificate	0.7	2.0	(*)	0.5	(*)	1.8
Transfer to 4-year institution	0.0	0.4	(*)	0.3	(*)	0.2
Other	0.5	1.7	(*)	0.5	(*)	1.5

*Not asked of students attending 4-year institutions.

NOTE: Values of 0.0 indicate true values of less than 0.05.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

Statistical Procedures

Two types of statistical procedures were used in this report: testing differences between means, and adjustment of means after controlling for covariation among a group of variables. Each procedure is described below.

Differences Between Means

The descriptive comparisons were tested in this report using Student's t statistic. Differences between estimates are tested against the probability of a Type I error, or significance level. The significance levels were determined by calculating the Student's t values for the differences between each pair of means or proportions and comparing these with published tables of significance levels for two-tailed hypothesis testing.

Student's t values may be computed to test the difference between estimates with the following formula:

$$t = \frac{E_1 - E_2}{\sqrt{se_1^2 + se_2^2}} \tag{1}$$

where E_1 and E_2 are the estimates to be compared and se_1 and se_2 are their corresponding standard errors. This formula is valid only for independent estimates. When estimates are not independent a covariance term must be added to the formula. If the comparison is between the mean of a subgroup and the mean of the total group, the following formula is used:

$$\frac{E_{sub} - E_{tot}}{\sqrt{se_{sub}^2 + se_{tot}^2 - 2p\ se_{sub}^2}} \tag{2}$$

where p is the proportion of the total group contained in the subgroup.[24]

When comparing two percentages from a distribution that adds to 100 percent, the following formula is used:

$$\frac{E_1 - E_2}{\sqrt{se_1^2 + se_2^2 - 2(r)se_1\, se_2}} \tag{3}$$

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[24] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *A Note from the Chief Statistician,* No. 2, 1993.

where r is the correlation between the two estimates.[25] The estimates, standard errors, and correlations can all be obtained from the DAS.

There are hazards in reporting statistical tests for each comparison. First, comparisons based on large t statistics may appear to merit special attention. This can be misleading, since the magnitude of the t statistic is related not only to the observed differences in means or percentages but also to the number of students in the specific categories used for comparison. Hence, a small difference compared across a large number of students would produce a large t statistic.

A second hazard in reporting statistical tests for each comparison occurs when making multiple comparisons among categories of an independent variable. For example, when making paired comparisons among different levels of income, the probability of a Type I error for these comparisons taken as a group is larger than the probability for a single comparison. When more than one difference between groups of related characteristics or "families" are tested for statistical significance, one must apply a standard that assures a level of significance for all of those comparisons taken together.

Comparisons were made in this report only when $p \leq .05/k$ for a particular pairwise comparison, where that comparison was one of k tests within a family. This guarantees both that the individual comparison would have $p \leq .05$ and that for k comparisons within a family of possible comparisons, the significance level for all the comparisons will sum to $p \leq .05$.[26]

For example, in a comparison of the percentages of males and females who enrolled in postsecondary education, only one comparison is possible (males versus females). In this family, $k=1$, and the comparison can be evaluated without adjusting the significance level. When students are divided into five racial–ethnic groups and all possible comparisons are made, then $k=10$ and the significance level of each test must be $p \leq .05/10$, or $p \leq .005$. The formula for calculating family size (k) is as follows:

$$k = \frac{j(j-1)}{2} \tag{4}$$

where j is the number of categories for the variable being tested. In the case of race–ethnicity, there are five racial–ethnic groups (American Indian/Alaskan Native; Asian/Pacific Islander;

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[25] Ibid.

[26] The standard that $p \leq .05/k$ for each comparison is more stringent than the criterion that the significance level of the comparisons should sum to $p \leq .05$. For tables showing the t statistic required to ensure that $p \leq .05/k$ for a particular family size and degrees of freedom, see Olive Jean Dunn, "Multiple Comparisons Among Means," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 56 (1961): 52–64.

black, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; and white, non-Hispanic), so when substituting 5 for j in equation 4,

$$k = \frac{5(5-1)}{2} = 10$$

Adjustment of Means to Control for Background Variation

Tabular results are limited by sample size when attempting to control for additional factors that may account for the variation observed between two variables. For example, when examining the percentages of those who completed a degree or were still enrolled in postsecondary education 5 years after their initial enrollment, it is impossible to know to what extent the observed variation is due to socioeconomic status (SES) differences and to what extent it is due to differences in other factors related to SES, such as type of institution attended, intensity of enrollment, and so on. However, if a nested table were produced showing SES within type of institution attended within enrollment intensity, the cell sizes would be too small to identify the patterns. When the sample size becomes too small to support controls for another level of variation, one must use other methods to take such variation into account.

To overcome this difficulty, multiple linear regression was used to obtain means that were adjusted for covariation among a list of control variables.[27] Adjusted means for subgroups were obtained by regressing the dependent variable on a set of descriptive variables such as gender, race–ethnicity, SES, and so on. Substituting ones or zeros for the subgroup characteristic(s) of interest and the mean proportions for the other variables results in an estimate of the adjusted proportion for the specified subgroup, holding all other variables constant. For example, consider a hypothetical case in which two variables, age and gender, are used to describe an outcome, Y (such as attaining a degree). The variables age and gender are recoded into a dummy variable representing age, A, and a dummy variable representing gender, G:

Age	A
24 years or older	1
Less than 24 years old	0
and	
Gender	G
Female	1
Male	0

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[27] For more information about weighted least squares regression, see Michael S. Lewis-Beck, *Applied Regression: An Introduction*, Vol. 22 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1980); William D. Berry and Stanley Feldman, *Multiple Regression in Practice*, Vol. 50 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1987).

The following regression equation is then estimated from the correlation matrix output from the DAS:

$$\hat{Y} = a + b_1 A + b_2 G \tag{5}$$

To estimate the adjusted mean for any subgroup evaluated at the mean of all other variables, one substitutes the appropriate values for that subgroup's dummy variables (1 or 0) and the mean for the dummy variable(s) representing all other subgroups. For example, suppose *Y* represents attainment, and is being described by age (*A*) and gender (*G*), coded as shown above, with means as follows:

Variable	Mean
A	0.355
G	0.521

Next, suppose the regression equation results in:

$$\hat{Y} = 0.15 + 0.17A + 0.01G \tag{6}$$

To estimate the adjusted value for older students, one substitutes the appropriate parameter estimates and variable values into equation 6.

Variable	Parameter	Value
a	0.15	—
A	0.17	1.000
G	0.01	0.521

This results in:

$$\hat{Y} = 0.15 + (0.17)(1) + (0.01)(0.521) = 0.325$$

In this case, the adjusted mean for older students is 0.325 and represents the expected outcome for older students who resemble the average student across the other variables (in this example, gender). In other words, the adjusted percentage who attained after controlling for age and gender is 32.5 percent (0.325 x 100 for conversion to a percentage).

It is relatively straightforward to produce a multivariate model using the DAS, since one of the DAS output options is a correlation matrix, computed using pairwise missing values.[28] This matrix can be used by most statistical software packages as the input data for least squares regression. That is the approach used for this report, with an additional adjustment to incorporate the complex sample design into the statistical significance tests of the parameter estimates (described below). For tabular presentation, parameter estimates and standard errors were multiplied by 100 to match the scale used for reporting unadjusted and adjusted percentages.

Most statistical software packages assume simple random sampling when computing standard errors of parameter estimates. Because of the complex sampling design used for the NPSAS survey, this assumption is incorrect. A better approximation of their standard errors is to multiply each standard error by the design effect associated with the dependent variable (DEFT),[29] where the DEFT is the ratio of the true standard error to the standard error computed under the assumption of simple random sampling. It is calculated by the DAS and produced with the correlation matrix.

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[28] Although the DAS simplifies the process of making regression models, it also limits the range of models. Analysts who wish to use an approach other than pairwise treatment of missing values or to estimate probit/logit models (which are the most appropriate for models with categorical dependent variables) can apply for a restricted data license from NCES. See John H. Aldrich and Forrest D. Nelson, *Linear Probability, Logit and Probit Models* (Quantitative Applications in Social Sciences, Vol. 45) (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984).

[29] The adjustment procedure and its limitations are described in C.J. Skinner, D. Holt, and T.M.F. Smith, eds., *Analysis of Complex Surveys* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1989).

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